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**The Social Drivers of International Relations in
the Gulf: Gramsci on the Case of Bahrain and
Gulf Alignment 1971–1981**

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is of my own composition, based on my own work, and that it has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

(Hsinyen Lai)

ABSTRACT

This thesis revisits the relationship between ideology and foreign policy in the Middle East, particularly that between Arab nationalism and state regional policy in the Gulf. It seeks to answer the question: What explains a Gulf Arab state's policy toward regional alignment in the independence phase? In doing so, the thesis explores the specific case of Bahrain between 1971 and 1981, a period in which Bahrain attained its formal independence and then moved towards alignment in the form of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). To answer this question, the thesis advances existing explanations in the study of international relations in the Middle East (IRME), especially the constructivist approach to norms and identities in the relationship between Arab nationalism and foreign policy. Some constructivists claim that shifts in regional norms from 'Arabism' to sovereignty allow one to explain foreign policy in the Middle East after 1967. While such a claim is received uncritically by IRME, the regional policies of individual Gulf Arab states have mostly been examined in this vein and thereby assumed to share some commonalities driven by cultural, sectarian and institutional homogeneity among these states in the region. However, this thesis offers an alternative account of it. By integrating other histories of Arab nationalism with IRME and conceptualising nationalism as a modern ideology, this thesis argues that internal socio-political dynamics mediate the interplay of ideology and a state's regional policy. It further argues that the formation and evolution of Arab nationalism in international relations of the Gulf is best understood beyond norms and identities, and examined under a more historical and sociological scrutiny – taking both colonial history and the process of capitalist formation into consideration.

This thesis draws on Antonio Gramsci's insights to build a theoretical framework for conducting a historical sociological investigation of the case of Bahrain. Through a reformulation of Gramsci in an alternative Gramscian approach to the Coxian one in the study of international relations (IR), this thesis reconstructs three interrelated concepts from Gramsci – development, ideology and struggle – to examine the social bases that conditioned the formation and evolution of Arab nationalism, and the political struggle that shaped a locus in which Arab nationalism influenced Bahrain's policy towards Gulf alignment in the 1970s. It argues that the

political struggle included different, contradictory more often than not, social forces deriving from Bahraini late-coming capitalist formation under British colonialism. Then, the struggle continued to impact on the ideological development of Arab nationalism and its interplay with Bahrain's regional policy. The thesis further argues, in a Gramscian sense, that the struggle was a conflict between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces, which escalated along with the rise of the New Arab Left and the upheaval caused by Marxist-Leninist revolutions in Arabia from the late 1960s onwards. But, it was unresolved after an interrupted process of 'historical restoration' between 1971 and 1975. As a consequence, the Al Khalifa regime in Bahrain, as an incomplete hegemony, faced the dilemma of being open about its alignment with the US. Nonetheless, in the second half of the 1970s and the early 1980s, a series of extended regional issues arose, including the Arab cause, the Iranian revolution in 1979 and the Iran-Iraq war in 1980. The ways in which Al Khalifa responded to these issues reflected the dynamic ideological ties between Arab nationalism and Bahrain's regional policy and paved the road to Bahrain's participation in the GCC in 1981. Through an integration of the Bahraini case and the reformulated Gramscian framework proposed in this thesis, the thesis offers a more complex account than the existing literature of international relations in the Gulf and contributes to the historical sociology of IRME in general.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ALBA	Aluminium Bahrain
ANM	The Arab Nationalist Movement prior to 1968
AUB	American University of Beirut
AWDU	Arab World Documentation Unit at Old Library, Exeter University
BAPCO	Bahraini Petroleum Company
BDF	Bahrain Defence Force
EPLF	Eritrean People's Liberation Front
FCO	British Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FPA	Foreign Policy Analysis
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
HEC	Higher Executive Committee
IFLB	Islamic Front for Liberation of Bahrain
IPE	(study of the) International Political Economy
IR	(study/ discipline of) International Relations
IRME	(study of) International Relations in the Middle East
LSE	London School of Economics and Political Science
NFL	National Front for Liberation (in Bahrain)
NUBS	National Union of Bahraini Students
NUC	National Union Committee
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
PDRY	People's Democratic Republic of Yemen in Aden/ South Yemen
PFB	Popular Front of Bahrain
PFLO	Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman
PFLOAG	Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arabian Gulf in Dhofar, Oman
PRM	Popular Revolutionary Movement in Oman and the Arab Gulf
SOAS	School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London

UAR

United Arab Republic

1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis revisits the relationship between ideology and foreign policy in international relations in the Middle East. By focusing on the interplay of Arab nationalism and regional policy in the Gulf, it answers the following questions: What explains a Gulf Arab state's policy towards regional alignment in the independence phase?¹ What explains the ideological development of Arab nationalism? How does the ideological development of Arab nationalism intersect with and drive the process of making a state's regional policy on alignment? This thesis addresses these questions through a case study of Bahrain between 1971 and 1981. Instead of following the various existing approaches of identity and norm, threat and security, and regime collaborative survival, it offers a historical sociological account of Bahrain's regional policy towards the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and its interplay with Arab nationalism.

Following the heyday of Pan-Arab nationalism and decolonisation in the 1950s and '60s, the 1970s witnessed a series of far-reaching influential events inherited from the comprehensive legacy of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war in the Middle East and then created the socio-political orders we see in the Gulf today: British military withdrawal from East of Suez in 1971, the formal independence of previously British protectorate Arab states, the fallout of Marxist-Leninist revolutions in South Yemen and Dhofar, the rise of counter-insurgent actions organised among Gulf monarchies, a US military presence through Nixon's twin-pillar policy, and more importantly the Iranian revolution in 1979 followed by the establishment of the GCC in 1981. This was the context wherein Bahrain became a formally independent Arab state after the long British colonial era and sought a new regional policy. In 1971, the Al Khalifa regime came from one tribal family, among others, that had settled in Bahrain in the late eighteenth century and was recognised by Britain as a Bahraini political authority

¹ In this thesis, I follow Michael Ward's definition of alignment, it 'is a more extensive concept than alliance since it does not focus solely upon the military dimension of international politics. Degrees of alignments in political, economic, military, and cultural spheres present a multifaceted sculpture of national and supranational postures'. Michael D. Ward, *Research Gaps in Alliance Dynamics* (Denver: University of Denver, 1982), 7; Thomas S. Wilkins, "'Alignment", Not "Alliance" – the Shifting Paradigm of International Security Cooperation: Toward a Conceptual Taxonomy of Alignment', *Review of International Studies* 38, no. 1 (2012): 56–58.

through protectorate treaties in 1820; it abandoned a proposed British scheme for a nine-shaikhdom federal state, supposedly unifying Bahrain with Qatar and other Trucial States. Instead, Al Khalifa declared Bahrain's independence in August of the same year, while signing a secret agreement with the US to keep 'the West' onshore.

The rejection of alignment with other neighbouring Arab states was then followed by Al Khalifa's political reform, which attempted to incorporate different social forces into a newly formed Bahraini government. By 1975, however, the political reform terminated due to the unsolved contentious issues of a US presence, State Security Law and external pressure from Saudi Arabia. Nonetheless, a series of extended events in the second half of the 1970s opened up alternative alignment choices for Al Khalifa, driving Bahrain's regional policy and paving the way towards participation in the GCC in 1981. In a post-colonial context, while this process was intertwined with protracted struggles between various social forces and colonial legacies, it marked a shift in Al Khalifa's decision on alignment resonating with changes in the ideological development of Arab nationalism. The thesis, therefore, offers an alternative explanation of Bahraini alignment and Arab nationalism during this period, and more broadly that of the interplay of nationalism and regional policy in post-colonial states. It develops, through a theoretical lens of historical sociology and Gramsci, I argue, by anatomising such historical processes as social drivers of international relations in the Gulf.

This introductory chapter begins with a discussion of the role of Arab nationalism in alignments that have been addressed in studies of international relations in the Middle East (IRME). For nearly two decades, the discussion has revolved around whether Arab nationalism has retreated since the *Naksa*, the setback of the Arab-Israeli war in 1967. With the influential constructivist intervention into IRME, particularly exemplified by Michael Barnett, it appears that the discussion has found an answer in that Arab nationalism has been seen as declining regional, parochial and cultural norms among Arab states and been replaced by universal sovereignty norms, which dictate state regional policy, including alignments. The present chapter then outlines the significance and proposed contribution of the thesis and how it offers an alternative historical sociological explanation of the case of Bahrain. Furthermore, the

chapter reviews the existing IRME literature on the relationship between Arab nationalism and foreign policy and identifies the gap that the thesis tries to fill. Following a methodological discussion of the thesis, the chapter ends with an overview of the thesis' organisation in which I briefly outline the arguments of individual chapters.

1.1 The Puzzle: Twilight of Arab Nationalism in International Relations of the Middle East?

The questions noted at the beginning of this chapter are relevant to a puzzle in respect of the role of Arab nationalism in international relations in the Middle East. The puzzle derives from a reflection on a seemingly widely accepted statement in IRME: The *Naksa* of the 1967 war brought about the twilight, or even demise, of Arab nationalism and made Arab nationalism less politically significant in inter-Arab politics, states' foreign policy and international relations in the Middle East. To put it more straightforwardly, in Adeed Dawisha's words: 'after 1967, hardly any of [the Arabs] believed in their eventual political unity. It was *Arab statism* not *Arab nationalism* that defined the post-1967 era, *wataniya* not *qawmiya* that determined political relations among the Arab states'.² The primary rationale of such a statement appeared earlier in Fouad Ajami's seminal article, entitled *The End of Pan-Arabism*, in 1978 and related to a context of what he saw as the Arab intellectual predicament of political thought and practice.³ It was during the time of Anwar Sadat's Egypt making a contentious peace agreement with Israel. To Ajami, such an agreement marked a decisive shift from the Pan-Arab state system to 'a normal state system' as 'a fact of life' in the politics of the Middle East.⁴ The 1967 war was 'the Waterloo of Pan-Arabism' that 'had underlined the vulnerability of the Arab system of states, the bankruptcy of the Arab order and its guardians, whether radical or conservative'. As a consequence, 'The champions of Pan-Arabism were defeated in the Arab system; the

² Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 254.

³ Fouad Ajami, *The Arab Predicament: Arab Political Thought and Practice since 1967* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

⁴ Fouad Ajami, 'The End of Pan-Arabism', *Foreign Affairs* 57, no. 5 (1978): 355.

idea had lost its magic'.⁵ Furthermore, its role 'to play havoc with sovereignty' had also lost ground and been left behind in the past while a new form of regional policy in the Middle East emerged.⁶

In spite of giving no clear definition, Ajami's use of the notion of Arabism, which refers to Arab political unity beyond state borders, seems to register as terminology in IRME scholarship. More importantly, his claim of a clash between Arabism and sovereignty norms gained currency and has been received uncritically by mainstream approaches to the study of international relations (IR), like constructivism and neorealism. Arabism denotes either social norms through which Arab leaders competed for a desired regional order through dialogue within 'the game of Arab politics',⁷ or an ideology as a source of legitimacy seeking the unity of Arab nations that 'could not be openly abandoned' and became a threat to some Arab regimes.⁸ From these analyses, an overarching impression is formed that seems to confirm the thesis of the twilight of Arabism or Arab nationalism, which could no more cast a spell dictating interstate relations among Arab states in the post-1967 era than statism.

The arguments of these analyses, however, contradicted another understanding of Arab nationalism. As Sune Haugbolle argues,

...a one-sided focus on these effects of [the demise of Arab nationalism] has overshadowed other histories that preceded and did not necessarily dovetail with Arab nationalist trajectories ... [Also,] it simplifies the complex relation between nationalism, socialism and revolution in Arab political culture.⁹

This complex relation has been depicted by another strand of scholarship from the traditions of Marxism. In such intellectual traditions, the historic moment of 1967 was driving the disintegration of the monolithic Pan-Arab doctrine and the disillusionment with Arab unity; as Ajami argues for the Palestinian split between Yassir Arafat and George Habash¹⁰ became instead a critical juncture in the revival of Arab nationalism.

⁵ Ajami, 357.

⁶ Ajami, 365.

⁷ Michael Barnett, *Dialogue in Arab Politics: Negotiation in Regional Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 7–12.

⁸ Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 211.

⁹ Sune Haugbolle, 'The New Arab Left and 1967', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 44, no. 4 (2017): 498–99.

¹⁰ Ajami, 'The End of Pan-Arabism', 360.

For Samir Amin, the 1967 war actually registered the end of Nasserism rather than that of Arab nationalism as a whole. The *Naksa*, as Amin argues, ‘served only to unmask the importance of bourgeois and petty bourgeois nationalism, be it supported by the West or by the USSR, be it based on local liberal capitalism or on state capitalism’.¹¹ His statement was not just an assertion or a Marxist manifesto. Instead, it was supported by other histories of Arab nationalism from below and around popular movements since the late 1960s and early 1970s, especially the wave of the New Arab Left whose impact has for a long time been overlooked and underestimated within IRME scholarship.¹²

From the divergent understanding of Arab nationalism presented by Ajami and Amin, for instance, it appears that the different implications of the *Naksa* of 1967 have between them led to varying interpretations of the fate of Arab nationalism in the post-1967 phase and thus its impact on state regional policy and alignment. What supports such variation is not the terms either Arabism or Arab nationalism but the analytical locus via which these terms have been defined and referred. Sometimes, as Nazih Ayubi reminds, ‘At one level of analysis, it is possible to argue that ‘Arabism’ has never in reality been more than a linguistic bond, void of any sociological substance’.¹³ And the term and its conceptualisation in IRME have just been inherited from and mingled with different intellectual legacies of both area studies and social science.¹⁴ As such, divergent accounts of the fate of Arab nationalism could be argued to derive from the different ways in which Arab nationalism has been defined in emphasised contexts and intellectual traditions that analysts prefer.

¹¹ Samir Amin, *The Arab Nation: Nationalism and Class Struggles*, trans. Michael Pallis (London: Zed Press, 1978), 63.

¹² For some exceptions, see Basil Raouf Al-Kubaisi, ‘The Arab Nationalist Movement 1951-1971: From Pressure Group to Socialist Party’ (PhD thesis, American University, 1971); Tareq Y. Ismael, *The Arab Left* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1976); Michaelle L. Browsers, *Political Ideology in the Arab World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 20–23; Abdel Razzaq Takriti, *Monsoon Revolution: Republicans, Sultans, and Empires in Oman 1965-1976* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); John Chalcraft, *Popular Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Sune Haugbolle and Manfred Sing, ‘New Approaches to Arab Left Histories’, *Arab Studies Journal* 24, no. 1 (2016): 90–97; Haugbolle, ‘The New Arab Left and 1967’.

¹³ Nazih N. Ayubi, *Over-Stating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 1995), 148.

¹⁴ Ewan Stein, ‘Beyond Arabism vs. Sovereignty: Relocating Ideas in the International Relations of the Middle East’, *Review of International Studies* 38, no. 4 (2012): 883–95.

If Ajami's thesis has been received widely among the existing IRME literature but contradicts histories from below as Amin has presented, we are waiting for an alternative account to those of neorealists and constructivists. In other words, if Arab nationalism did not die out but was rejuvenated, one needs to make sense of its role in the international relations of the Middle East in the post-1967 phase and its interplay with state regional policy. As Haugbolle argues for the case of the New Arab Left, the radical leftward current of Arab nationalist movements in the 1960s and '70s,

Even though the New [Arab] Left [movements] – student movements, new political parties, radical thought and cultural expression, and revolutionary movements attracted to anti-imperialist, Marxist-Leninist or Maoist ideology – were never numerically large enough to challenge the regional order, they had a profound impact during and after 'the long 1960s' in the Arab Middle East.¹⁵

To investigate such a profound impact is, thus, a task this thesis attempts to accomplish. But, how does this thesis define and conceptualise Arab nationalism in giving alternative accounts to that given by Ajami and among others? In the debate on Arab nationalism and nationalism in the Middle East in general,¹⁶ I follow a modernist definition that refers Arab nationalism to both 'a set of ideas about how the world is run and, equally, about how it should be run' and 'a set of movements– political movements arising at particular times with specific leadership'.¹⁷ That is to say, by conceptualising Arab nationalism as a modern political ideology and movement whose formation and evolution are both related to structural changes on a macro scale and agents' practices on a micro level, this thesis does not define Arab nationalism as a system of prior ideas of cultural identities and norms or political dogmas. Rather, it is taken to be a historical and sociological product whose political connotations only become meaningful if they are revealed through and based on our understanding of the complexity of a social totality, which sees 'each of the varieties of social structure in its components and its totality' through a sort of 'sociological imagination'.¹⁸ In other words, Arab nationalism is not historically fixed but can be seen as reflecting the

¹⁵ Haugbolle, 'The New Arab Left and 1967', 500.

¹⁶ For different approaches to nationalism in the Middle East and their implications, see Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski, 'Introduction', in *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle East*, ed. James Jankowski and Israel Gershoni (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), xiii–xxv; Fred Halliday, *Nation and Religion in the Middle East* (London: Saqi Books, 2000), 31–43.

¹⁷ Halliday, *Nation and Religion in the Middle East*, 32.

¹⁸ C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 134.

political aspects of certain social relations in the Arab world. Its origin, evolution, variation and interplay with regional politics will be examined through the empirical case of Bahrain in the 1970s and a historical sociological framework of Gramsci, in both of which the significance and contribution of this thesis reside.

1.2 The Contribution: Historical Sociology of International Relations in the Gulf

What does historical sociology offer this thesis, and what is the potential contribution of the thesis from taking a historical sociological approach? In this section, I highlight how historical sociology provides a lens through which the issue of compartmentalisation – a dichotomous reading of the national and international sphere, and ideational and material factors – in existing mainstream IR approaches can be rectified, and thereby reconceptualise the state as a social and political entity whose agency might vary across cases. While adopting such a lens, an oft-conceived homogeneous brand of the Gulf Arab states is further reconsidered and thus the relationship of Arab nationalism with regional policy can be re-examined beyond a commonality of culture.

1.2.1. Prisms of historical sociology: states under reconsideration

A common theme can be noted among the interventions of existing historical sociologist work into IR: that is, the notion of the state in the conventional IR understanding has been reconsidered through a historical sociological lens, mainly that of neo-Weberian traditions.¹⁹ These attempts have shifted the focus on the unitary characteristics of the state in conventional IR readings to a more institutional concept

¹⁹ Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Theda Skocpol, 'Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research', in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 3–38; Charles Tilly, 'War Making and State Making as Organized Crime', in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 169–91; Fred Halliday, 'State and Society in International Relations: A Second Agenda', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 16, no. 2 (1987): 215–29; John M. Hobson, *The Wealth of States: A Comparative Sociology of International Economic and Political Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); John M. Hobson, *The State and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

of the state. The notion of the state is reconsidered through an examination of the inward and outward linkages of a 'Janus-faced state', 'an intrinsically dual anchorage in class-divided socio-economic structure and an international system of states'.²⁰ It allows one to disentangle the national-territorial state, to examine the role of the state in more complex relations between social action and structural forces, and to explain social processes in which 'international factors are conjoined with domestic variables'.²¹ It then also 'unleashes the fetters' of structural determinants and 'carves the terrain' of domestic state-society relations, agential traits of the state, and ideology in understanding structure-agent relations in IR.²² Such a reconsideration of the institutional dimensions of the state leads to reflection on the neorealist approach of omni-balancing to the international relations of Middle East states. As will be shown later, it is problematic to assume a highly autonomous role for the state in balancing multilevel challenges, and to see foreign policy as a product of the practices and omni-balancing tactics employed by regimes in presumed dichotomous state-society relations.

Following the traditions of historical sociology, IRME scholarship has contributed to a variety of topics. A bridge between area studies and IR disciplines has been well established through reconsideration of both historical and sociological aspects of the region and states. These topics range from a general historical sociological overview of international relations in the Middle East,²³ intertwined state formation and capitalist development in the Middle East,²⁴ the emergence of a modern state system in the Arab world,²⁵ state power in war-making and social change,²⁶ the

²⁰ Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China*, 32.

²¹ George Lawson, 'The Promise of Historical Sociology in International Relations', *International Studies Review* 8, no. 3 (2006): 408.

²² George Lawson, 'Historical Sociology in International Relations: Open Society, Research Programme and Vocation', *International Politics* 44, no. 4 (2007): 347.

²³ Fred Halliday, *The Middle East in International Relations: Power, Politics and Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

²⁴ Simon Bromley, *Rethinking Middle East Politics* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994).

²⁵ Fred H. Lawson, *Constructing International Relations in the Arab World* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).

²⁶ Thierry Gongora, 'War Making and State Power in the Contemporary Middle East', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 29, no. 3 (1997): 323–40; Steven Heydemann, ed., *War, Institution and Social Change in the Middle East* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2000).

challenges of Middle East state formation,²⁷ intellectuals and foreign policy formation²⁸ to the recent revival of historical materialist traditions in explaining political Islam, modernity, the origins of capitalism and alignments in the region.²⁹ These attempts have more or less acknowledged that, in the Middle East context, state autonomy in the process of making foreign policy has been constrained or strengthened by the legacy of colonial history, which has had an impact on both the domestic socio-political establishment and external relationships of a state. Through the prism of historical sociology adopted as such within IRME, I further argue that the interplay of ideology and state foreign policy can then also be best revisited via an understanding of how a reconsidered state is linked to both domestic society and international social change. For this, the tradition of historical sociology allows us to go beyond an assumed common orientation of regional policy in the Gulf Arab states that has been portrayed in the existing literature.

1.2.2 Regional policy of Gulf Arab states: beyond commonality

A survey of scholarship on international relations in the Gulf suggests a theoretical gap between this sub-region and the general development of some sub-fields of IR, like foreign policy analysis (FPA), security studies and the dynamics of interstate action.³⁰ Nonetheless, for a long time, six Gulf Arab monarchies have been treated as a sub-regional bloc in IRME owing to their common cultural, historical, economic, geopolitical and even institutional features.³¹ These features then leave

²⁷ Raymond Hinnebusch, 'Toward a Historical Sociology of State Formation in the Middle East', *Middle East Critique* 19, no. 3 (2010): 201–16; Adham Saouli, *The Arab State: Dilemma of Late Formation* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

²⁸ Ewan Stein, *Representing Israel in Modern Egypt: Ideas, Intellectuals and Foreign Policy from Nasser to Mubarak* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012).

²⁹ Kamran Matin, 'International Relations in the Making of Political Islam: Interrogating Khomeini's "Islamic Government"', *Journal of International Relations and Development* 16, no. 4 (2013): 455–82; Kamran Matin, *Recasting Iranian Modernity: International Relations and Social Change* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013); Kerem Nisancioglu, 'The Ottoman Origins of Capitalism: Uneven and Combined Development and Eurocentrism', *Review of International Studies* 40, no. 2 (2014): 325–47; Jamie Allinson, *The Struggle for The State in Jordan: The Social Origins of Alliances in the Middle East* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2016).

³⁰ Fred Lawson, 'From Here We Begin: A Survey of Scholarship on the International Relations of the Gulf', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 36, no. 3 (2009): 337–57.

³¹ Hassan Hamdan al-Alkim, *The GCC States in an Unstable World: Foreign-Policy Dilemmas of Small States* (London: Saqi Books, 1994); Steven Wright, 'Foreign Policy in the GCC States', in *International Politics of the Persian Gulf*, ed. Mehran Kamrava (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2011), 72–93.

IRME scholarship prone to adopt a multilevel and multi-contextual framework to examine the ‘commonalities’ of Gulf monarchies.

The most oft-identified feature is the patriarchal tribalism of Gulf monarchies and Islam, which have a comprehensive impact on social relations, political systems and policymaking in these states. The tenets of tribalism and Islam offer ideological power sources for social and political systems in the Gulf and have been absorbed into state apparatuses.³² These ideological forces have been taken as instruments with which the Gulf monarchies fought against Nasserism and communism and fortified the domestic patriarchal system. Simultaneously, foreign policy functions as a personalised privilege within the coterie of royal family members, and it hampers the development of professional bureaucracy in the process of decision-making.³³ However, the tribalism and Islam mirrored in foreign policy have not been represented unanimously in the Gulf. The representation of tribalism sometimes varies among Gulf monarchies depending on inter-elite relationships in these states, and this variation then influences how foreign policy is formulated. Steven Wright argues that inter-dynastic power struggles in the royal family do in fact have a substantial influence on foreign policy formulation in the Gulf. The previous understanding of king’s privilege or the complete fulfilment of the king’s personal objectives in making decisions might not reflect the reality. Instead, foreign policymaking is processed through a political dynamism within an ‘elite-level alliance network’ in which cooperative or rival relationships among elites generate foreign policy output.³⁴ In other words, the variations in dynamic domestic politics might impact on foreign policy orientation.

As for presenting Islamic values in foreign policy, this cannot necessarily be seen as merely an official ideology of seeking solidarity with *umma*; instead, it is more like serving the regime’s interests and increasing influence in the region. Saudi Arabia, for example, magnified Islamic value in foreign policy to counterbalance the challenge of Arab nationalists and leftists in the late 1960s and ’70s.³⁵ Even though the sectarian

³² F. Gregory Gause III, *Oil Monarchies: Domestic and Security Challenges in the Arab Gulf States* (New York: Council of Foreign Relations Press, 1994), 10–41.

³³ al-Alkim, *The GCC States in an Unstable World: Foreign-Policy Dilemmas of Small States*.

³⁴ Wright, ‘Foreign Policy in the GCC States’, 78–80.

³⁵ James P. Piscatori, ‘Islamic Values and National Interest: The Foreign Policy of Saudi Arabia’, in *Islam in Foreign Policy*, ed. Adeed Dawisha (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 33.

nature of domestic society can be identified, the role of opposition sectarian groups sometimes dilutes the potency of Islam as a contributing factor to explain foreign policy. Katja Niethammer argues that the current domestic political reform led by Islamist groups in the Gulf, especially Shia groups in Bahrain, has an unexpected impact on foreign policy in which the orientation of discourse and strategies practised by regimes has been changed.³⁶ In this regard, ideologies being conveyed in the foreign policy of Gulf monarchies cannot be taken as individual state elites' thinking, but relates to dynamic domestic political development. The representation of patriarchal tribalism and Islam in the foreign policy of Gulf monarchies varies with the complex social and political relations on the domestic level.

The other commonality of Gulf monarchies shaping foreign policy refers to the tactics of omni-balancing. This has been practised by Gulf monarchies to manage multilevel challenges and security predicaments, which have been seen as a residual impact left by an unfulfilled process of state formation. Marc O'Reilly has examined the case of Oman and how the Qabus regime has effectively exercised 'omni-balancing' in foreign policy to achieve the regime's political consolidation, with the support of oil wealth. Material resources based on rentier economics allow the Qabus regime to build up its education infrastructure and welfare system and maintain cordial ties with Iran, Israel, other Gulf monarchies and Western states.³⁷ His account challenges Steven David's assumption of dichotomous state-society relations, which suggests that 'it makes little sense to rely on a theory derived from a different historical experience that fails to address the reality of [states]'.³⁸ O'Reilly echoes what Mohammed Ayoob notes: the higher degree of 'political capacity' or 'institutional coherence' that state elites have, the higher the level of security that can be achieved by the regime in developing the state.³⁹ Moreover, O'Reilly's account shows that the tactics of omni-balancing might be practised in Gulf monarchies differently depending on how

³⁶ Katja Niethammer, 'Political Reform and Foreign Policy in Persian Gulf Monarchies', in *International Politics of the Persian Gulf*, ed. Mehran Kamrava (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2011), 234–56.

³⁷ Marc J. O'Reilly, 'Omanibalancing: Oman Confronts an Uncertain Future', *The Middle East Journal* 52, no. 1 (1998): 70–84.

³⁸ Steven R. David, 'Explaining Third World Alignment', *World Politics* 43, no. 2 (1991): 256.

³⁹ Ayoob Mohammed, *The Third World Security Predicament: State Making, Regional Conflict and the International System* (Colorado and London: Lynne Rienner, 1995), 21.

economic resources are distributed in the society through the institutional role of the state in society.

From these analyses, the commonalities of the Gulf Arab states have been reflected by scholars through culture or strategic tactics. Both ideational and material factors have been reconsidered in several empirical cases studies in which their influence on state foreign policy has been alluded to. The existing scholarly understanding has realised that dynamic domestic politics and social relations between state and society do indeed have an impact on the external relations of these states. However, how internal social dynamics intertwine and correspond to regional politics has as yet rarely been theorised. Theoretical discussions of changing state-society relations, the concept of state and the role of other social agents still remain sparse in discussions of Gulf Arab states' regional policies. And this is the gap which the theoretical framework proposed in this thesis tries to fill.

1.2.3 Historical sociology of state regional policy

What is the historical sociological approach to state regional policy that this thesis proposes, and what is its potential contribution? To address this question, it is helpful to first consider the intersection of historical sociology and the study of foreign policy in a broader sense. As Fred Halliday argues, historical sociology 'shares common ground with foreign policy analysis in looking at domestic context, but retains a concept of the state as a distinct institutional category, not the sum of myriad decisions'. It offers a theoretical way of looking at 'the core components of a political and social order, the state, ideology and society, [it] focuses specifically on how institutions ... are established and maintained'. In this regard,

...foreign policy is a product not just of personal and bureaucratic process[es] within [the] state but of the interests, and clashes, of state and class alike. Ideology and norms are central, not as the constitutive domain of politics, but rather as part of the process of legitimation and coercion.⁴⁰

In this vein, some historical sociologists have argued for 'incorporating micro-analysis...to focus on smaller scale changes that impact on specific states and on the international system as whole... [and to] bring back an often missing dimension of

⁴⁰ Halliday, *The Middle East in International Relations: Power, Politics and Ideology*, 35–37.

agency to macro-historical accounts of IR'.⁴¹ Others have also acknowledged that, for example, neoclassical realism 'bears a family resemblance' to historical sociology in terms of appreciating the international structural factors but without sacrificing the complexity within society.⁴² Following such an observation, I further argue, in the case of Bahrain, that the social bases of state regional policy and its interplay with Arab nationalism need to be unpacked via reconciled micro-macro approaches. This will be examined through a historical analysis of the colonial past and legacy and a sociological investigation of the development of capitalist relations both of which have influenced socio-political dynamics across the national, regional and international levels. As such, the version of foreign policy research presented in this thesis follows in the tracks of some scholars who have attempted to link the traditions of historical sociology to the study of foreign policy.⁴³ Its research agenda is actually more closely affiliated to IRME scholarship than FPA.

In doing so, I take one of the particular intellectual traditions of historical sociology that has recently been revived at the interface of historical materialism and IR. These historical materialist approaches to IR are distinct from mainstream approaches, such as neorealism and constructivism, in their close attention to inter-state relations. The historical materialist approaches do instead highlight the relationship between social structures in the mode of production and the geopolitical system by identifying the traits of 'the empire of civil society'⁴⁴ or deciphering 'the myth of 1648'.⁴⁵ Regardless of any internal debate with this tradition, international relations have been conceptualised as inter-societal relations, linked through the emergence of global capitalist modernity and interstate geopolitical competition via

⁴¹ Bryan Mabee, 'Levels and Agents, States and People: Micro-Historical Sociological Analysis and International Relations', *International Politics* 44, no. 4 (2007): 433.

⁴² Lawson, 'The Promise of Historical Sociology in International Relations', 408.

⁴³ Halliday, *The Middle East in International Relations: Power, Politics and Ideology*, 41–72; Ewan Stein, 'Conceptions of Israel and the Formation of Egyptian Foreign Policy, 1952–1981' (PhD thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2008); Ewan Stein, 'The "Camp David Consensus": Ideas, Intellectuals, and the Division of Labor in Egypt's Foreign Policy toward Israel', *International Studies Quarterly* 55, no. 3 (2011): 737–58; Stein, *Representing Israel in Modern Egypt: Ideas, Intellectuals and Foreign Policy from Nasser to Mubarak*; Allinson, *The Struggle for The State in Jordan: The Social Origins of Alliances in the Middle East*.

⁴⁴ Justin Rosenberg, *The Empire of Civil Society: A Critique of the Realist Theory of International Relations* (London and New York: Verso, 1994).

⁴⁵ Benno Teschke, *The Myth of 1648: Class, Geo-Politics, and the Making of Modern International Relations* (London and New York: Verso, 2003).

the abstract notion of ‘the international’. IR is about more than the rise of the nation-state from Westphalian norms, it also concerns ‘a context of the spread of capitalism across the global, and the subjugation of pre-capitalist societies’.⁴⁶ Through such a lens, the notion of international relations in the contemporary context can be referred to as ‘capitalism, the social formations it generated and the world system they comprise’.⁴⁷ And the sociological connotations of international relations are presented not through nation-states but classes. As Halliday puts it,

If within a particular state classes act to subject and control those less powerful than themselves, they act internationally to ally with groups similar to themselves when this is beneficial, and to compete with them by peaceful or military means, when rivalry is preferred ... [Thus], each ruling class has been able to use the international character of capitalism both to find support for the preservation of its own position within society, by allying with others, and to see in the international arena a domain for the extension of its own interests and power.⁴⁸

This understanding considers the logic of international relations as an extension of class struggle within society, rather than merely international socialisation as proposed by nation-state actors. And ‘the international’ does not denote an international society, as the English school might argue, or that a set of Eurocentric values like sovereignty norms are universally disseminated across the world as mainstream IR theories assume; rather, the encounter between the international, as conceived in Eurocentric accounts, and other areas of the world is materialistic in itself.⁴⁹

As for the Middle East, its encounter with the West, in various conduits for the creation of institutions, ideologies, practices and then socio-political conflict, can be traced back to the colonial history of the region. Such an explanation allows an understanding of the region beyond a clash of civilisations, one essentialized as culturally peculiar area for *its* Islamic traditions or Arab politics.⁵⁰ Instead, the Middle

⁴⁶ Fred Halliday, *Rethinking International Relations* (London: Macmillan, 1994), 61.

⁴⁷ Halliday, 61.

⁴⁸ Halliday, Fred, *Rethinking International Relations*, London: Macmillan, 1994, p. 63.

⁴⁹ Fred Halliday, ‘The Middle East and Conceptions of “International Society”’, in *International Society and the Middle East: English School Theory at the Regional Level*, ed. Barry Buzan and Ana Gonzalez-Pelaez (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 1–23.

⁵⁰ Fred Halliday, ‘For an International Sociology’, in *Historical Sociology of International Relations*, ed. Stephen Hobden and John M. Hobson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 278.

East has been part of the third world due to *its* shared history of confronting colonialism and the spread of global capitalism, which find its materialistic features in this long-term historical progress.⁵¹ In this way, an awkward relationship between the Middle East and the West (or the international dominated by the West) has not been due to ‘the result of an incomplete spread of Westphalian values, or the resistance of undemocratic, or Islam, or Asiatic societies and polities to democratic values, but to the very character, and violence, of that spread itself’.⁵² The process of international socialisation is ‘the means by which a ruling class or dominant state imposes its values on the subordinated classes and seeks to present these values as the only available ones, as natural, eternal and immutable’.⁵³ This is a process that can be found extensively in the Middle East. IR historical materialism, through its rationale of a ‘social structure forming organic [and] systemic totalities’, and thus enables and anatomises international relations beyond ‘dichotomous compartmentalisations of social relations’ – the domestic versus the international level, and material versus ideational factors – employed by neorealism and constructivism.⁵⁴

For these reasons, I adopt the insights of Gramsci, which are inherited from the traditions of historical materialism and resonate with the research agenda of reconsidering the institutional aspects of the state in historical sociology, as a particular historical sociological approach to the case of Bahrain. As will be shown later, in chapter 2, although Gramsci has already been introduced through Robert Cox and is well-known via Neo-Gramscianism in the field of International Political Economy (IPE), his merits have rarely been fully appreciated in IR, let alone in IRME.⁵⁵ Through some aspects of Gramsci have recently been reappraised by scholars, this thesis reconstructs three major concepts informed by Gramsci – development, ideology and

⁵¹ Fred Halliday, *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation: Religion and Politics in the Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), 22.

⁵² Halliday, ‘The Middle East and Conceptions of “International Society”’, 18.

⁵³ Halliday, 21.

⁵⁴ Alexander Anievas, ‘The Renaissance of Historical Materialism in International Relations Theory: An Introduction’, in *Marxism and World Politics: Contesting Global Capitalism* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 2.

⁵⁵ Except for Roberto Roccu, ‘Gramsci in Cairo: Neoliberal Authoritarianism, Passive Revolution and Failed Hegemony in Egypt under Mubarak, 1991-2010’ (PhD thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2012); Chalcraft, *Popular Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East*; Brecht De Smet, *Gramsci on Tahrir: Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Egypt* (London: Pluto Press, 2016).

struggle – to examine the social bases that condition the formation and evolution of Arab nationalism, and the political struggle that shapes a locus in which Arab nationalism influenced Bahrain’s policy towards Gulf cooperation in the 1970s. By employing these interrelated concepts reconstructed as a total theoretical framework, the thesis sheds lights on the Bahraini case from the aspect of its colonial history and late-coming capitalist formation (development), the connotations of Arab nationalism as modern ideology (ideology), and the political struggle among different social forces (struggle). Then, this Gramscian framework helps this thesis to theorise how internal socio-political dynamics drives state regional policy in the independence phase. By integrating Gramscian insights with the specific and illustrative case of Bahrain, this thesis offers a historical materialist account of the formation and evolution of ideology and its interplay with international relations in the Gulf, and thereby contributes to the historical sociology of IRME in general.

1.3 The Literature: Identity, State Formation and Social Change around Foreign Policy

To justify my proposal of adopting the historical sociological approach of Gramsci in this thesis, this section offers a review of the existing literature on the relationship of ideas and foreign policy in IRME and outlines why the literature might fail to give convincing answers to Arab nationalism and state regional policy.

Ever since a call for ‘the return of culture and identity in IR theory’ in the late 1990s,⁵⁶ examination of the role of ideas, especially identity, in foreign policy has burgeoned as one of the major research agendas in IR following liberalist attempts.⁵⁷ It has been conducted via a blend of constructivist and institutionalist approaches to the normatively constrained structure,⁵⁸ the interplay between regional and national-

⁵⁶ Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil, eds., *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner, 1997); Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, eds., *Security Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Colorado and London: Lynne Rienner, 1998).

⁵⁷ Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane, eds., *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions and Political Change* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

⁵⁸ Barnett, *Dialogue in Arab Politics: Negotiation in Regional Order*.

state identity politics perceived by state elites,⁵⁹ the intrinsically political and religious cultural characteristics of states⁶⁰ and ontological security in interstate enmity and conflict.⁶¹ With scholarly reflection on the linkage of Middle Eastern politics and IR,⁶² there has been also an epistemological debate on the approach to this region. How to justify taking either disciplinary orientation towards parsimony and generalization, or area studies specialization in language, culture and history, has become a threshold issue for students of IRME.⁶³ Despite the ongoing debate, there is no doubt that the Middle East offers ‘an ideal testing ground for IR’ with respect to scholarly concerns of ‘national and state identities, supra- and sub-national challenges to the state system, or the politics of ethnic and religious identity’.⁶⁴

For my purpose of exploring the interplay of ideas and foreign policy in the Middle East, a review of existing research on the role of ideas in Middle East state foreign policy is imperative for laying the groundwork of this thesis.⁶⁵ This section proceeds with a review of three major approaches – constructivism, eclecticism and historical sociology – to ideas and foreign policy within IRME scholarship. It focuses on how they understand the provenance of ideas and thus explain a societal context in which ideas influence foreign policy.

⁵⁹ Thomas Risse et al., ‘To Euro or Not to Euro? The EMU and Identity Politics in the European Union’, *European Journal of International Relations* 5, no. 2 (1999): 147–87.

⁶⁰ Mark Tessler and Jodi Nachtwey, ‘Islam and Attitudes Toward International Conflict: Evidence from Survey Research in the Arab World’, *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 42, no. 5 (1998): 619–36; John S. Duffield, ‘Political Culture and State Behavior: Why Germany Confounds Neorealism’, *International Organisation* 53, no. 4 (1999): 765–803.

⁶¹ May Darwich, ‘The Ontological (In)Security of Similarity Wahhabism Versus Islamism in Saudi Foreign Policy’, *Foreign Policy Analysis* 12, no. 3 (2016): 469–88.

⁶² James A. Bill, ‘The Study of Middle East Politics: 1946–1996: A Stocktaking’, *Middle East Journal* 50, no. 4 (1996): 501–12; Andrea Teti, ‘Bridging the Gap: IR, Middle East Studies and the Disciplinary Politics of the Area Studies Controversy’, *European Journal of International Relations* 13, no. 1 (2007): 117–45.

⁶³ For the discussion on the tension between two approaches to the Middle East, see Mark Tessler, Jodi Nachtwey, and Anne Banda, ‘Introduction: The Area Studies Controversy’, in *Area Studies and Social Sciences: Strategies for Understanding Middle East Politics*, ed. Mark Tessler, Jodi Nachtwey, and Anne Dressel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), vii–xxi.

⁶⁴ Morton Valbjørn, ‘The Meeting of the Twain: Bridging the Gap Between International Relations and Middle East Studies’, *Cooperation and Conflict* 38, no. 2 (2003): 163.

⁶⁵ The term of ideas, which is used in the present chapter for a purpose of literature review, refers much to a broader and loose definition that contains political ideologies, group identity and elements of belief and normative system.

1.3.1 IR Constructivism: identity and norms

Following reflectivist critiques of the nature of international politics in a rationalist paradigm, some IR constructivists have found that the Middle East offers valuable cases, substantiating their accounts of conflict and cooperation among states based on explanations of ideational factors.⁶⁶ Through a lens of IR constructivism⁶⁷, the notions of Arabism and Arab nationalism have been used uncritically and interchangeably with reference to a cultural and normative structure that derives a shared identity among Arab states and shapes their interests and behaviours.⁶⁸ The ‘lack of overlap’ between state identity and national identity, as Barnett and Telhami argue, usually results in the inherently instability of Arab states due to the process of state-building failing to conflate the two. This process is not about domestic political dynamics but about how state leaders digest ‘the national imagery from its transnational status to the confines of the state’.⁶⁹ In this regard, Arabism is usually taken as a holistic normative structure that constitutes components of identity or ideas. For some IR constructivists who see the Middle East as a laboratory for the cultural turn of IR theories, the international social structure of this region, with its salient cultural characteristics, has been considered a cradle of ideas.

The ways in which ideas influence foreign policy have also been anatomised through a IR constructivist lens, which considers state elites’ perceptions of collective identity as embedded in a normative structure. For shaping identity in general, Telhami and Barnett argue that ‘[t]he contemporary possibilities in the Middle East are limited by history and have typically revolved around one of three influences: statism, Islam,

⁶⁶ Barnett, *Dialogue in Arab Politics: Negotiation in Regional Order*; Marc Lynch, *State Interests and Public Spheres: The International Politics of Jordan's Identity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Shibley Telhami and Michael Barnett, ‘Introduction’, in *Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East*, ed. Shibley Telhami and Michael Barnett (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 1–25.

⁶⁷ This thesis refers IR constructivism to ‘conventional’ constructivism in IR, which has theoretical, epistemological and methodological difference from ‘critical’ constructivism. See Ted Hopf, ‘The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory’, *International Security* 23, no. 1 (1998): 171–200.

⁶⁸ Michael Barnett, ‘Sovereignty, Nationalism, and Regional Order in the Arab States System’, *International Organisation* 49, no. 3 (1995): 479–510; Michael Barnett, ‘Identity and Alliances in the Middle East’, in *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, ed. Peter Katzenstein (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 400–449.

⁶⁹ Telhami and Barnett, ‘Introduction’, 8–9.

and Arabism'.⁷⁰ Generally speaking, the formation of national-state identity is closely related to the emergence of subnational identity; yet, such possibilities become more limited due to the institutionalisation and legitimation of the state in the Middle East. In this way, various identities can be sorted out, on either trans- or sub-national levels, as 'a menu of choice' for the state's instrumental purposes.⁷¹ How state elites select or take advantage of identity from the 'menu' defines the interests that state elites might pursue. This is a device on which constructivists focus regarding the question of how exactly identity influences foreign policy. When the objective of foreign policy is taken as the pursuit of the state's interests, identity defines interests and plays a key role in affecting foreign policy orientation. As Telhami and Barnett further argue, 'identity can be an important source of the state's national interests' and, for instance, 'only by noting how Arabism shapes the Egyptian national interest are we able to explain many significant foreign-policy events'.⁷²

From Telhami and Barnett's explanation, it is not difficult to see that their rationale tries to challenge not only the definition of state interest based on rational calculation in IR, but also neorealist perspectives of a deterministic international material structure of state behaviour. The debate with neorealists, however, constrains their theoretical locus at the interstate level. For instance, they see the competition among Arab states as a struggle for 'political prestige' among Arab leaders who were desperate to 'gain tremendous symbolic and political capital by demonstrating that they were the fiercest defenders of Arabism'.⁷³ The competition over political discourse on Arabism among state elites generates momentum for the reproduction of an existing normative structure. When the competition no longer revolves around the symbol of Arabism, it is then followed by a decline in Arabism and the emergence of another normative structure. The new normative structure does not emerge from a 'normative vacuum' but from competitive 'norm dynamics',⁷⁴ it changes the pattern

⁷⁰ Telhami and Barnett, 13.

⁷¹ Telhami and Barnett, 14–16.

⁷² Telhami and Barnett, 17.

⁷³ Telhami and Barnett, 20.

⁷⁴ Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, 'International Norm Dynamics and Political Change Cambridge: MIT Press.', in *Exploration and Contestation in the Study of World Politics*, ed. Peter J. Katzenstein, Robert O. Keohane, and Stephen D. Krasner (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1999), 257.

of the ‘dialogues in Arab politics’ and redefines the meaning of state interest.⁷⁵ Accordingly, a normatively constrained structure built upon interstate relations, more specifically on inter-state-elite communication and competition, weighs heavily.

1.3.2 *Eclecticism: state formation and identity*

The other approach is through an eclecticist lens of multi-level analysis, and the incorporation of ideational and material factors, which has been introduced in the study of foreign policy of Arab states, the Middle East and, more broadly, third-world states.⁷⁶ Following this approach, an analytical framework for foreign policy in the Middle East is proposed by integrating the perspectives of Marxism, constructivism and even neorealism into pluralist readings. As Raymond Hinnebusch argues, ‘state elites have an interest in maximizing the autonomy and security of the state’ in the process of formulating foreign policy; yet, owing to unfulfilled consolidation of the state system in the Middle East as a result of economic dependency and the incongruity of sub-, supra-state and state identity, a purely neorealist analysis of ‘system level’ applied to the region appears unconvincing and needs to be complemented by other theoretical tools.⁷⁷ With modified constructivist viewpoints, how ideas influence foreign policy is examined by looking at how state elites manage the interplay between challenges on the interstate and domestic levels. On the interstate level, a social normative structure might lead to interstate elite competition within cross-state boundaries of the Arab community. Nonetheless, that is not competition among sovereignty states in a conventional neorealist understanding of a material power struggle. It was ‘the game’, as Hinnebusch further notes, ‘played by ideological or

⁷⁵ Barnett, *Dialogue in Arab Politics: Negotiation in Regional Order*.

⁷⁶ Bahgat Korany, *How Foreign Policy Decisions Are Made in the Third World: A Comparative Analysis* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1984); Bahgat Korany and Ali E. Hillal Dessouki, *The Foreign Policies of Arab States: The Challenge of Change* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1991); Raymond Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami, eds., *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States* (Colorado and London: Lynne Rienner, 2002); Bahgat Korany and Ali E. Hillal Dessouki, *The Foreign Policies of Arab States: The Challenge of Globalization* (Cairo: the American University in Cairo Press, 2008); Raymond Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami, eds., *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States*, 2nd ed. (Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 2014).

⁷⁷ Raymond Hinnebusch, ‘Introduction: The Analytic Framework’, in *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States*, ed. Raymond Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami (London: Lynne Rienner, 2002), 1–2.

symbolic competition in which leaders were ambitious for Pan-Arab leadership'.⁷⁸ Different from IR constructivism, this approach acknowledges that the societal level on which Arab nationalist activists challenge local governments and political discourse within the Arab community is another factor influencing foreign policy. The ideological influence of Pan-Arab nationalism itself might come from domestic power struggles, i.e. the new middle class along with the high tide of Arab nationalism challenging the oligarchy in the 1950s.⁷⁹ This multi-level ideological competition then affects the influence of ideas on state foreign policy.

Some features can be identified in this theoretical approach as presented mainly by Hinnebusch. A theoretical framework has been proposed to abandon conventional IR's parsimonious methodology. It echoes to a certain extent a historical sociological concept of state formation, while explaining how ideas constrain foreign policy. The varying processes of state formation usually determine the degree to which identity or ideas influence foreign policy in the Middle East. As Hinnebusch asserts, 'where there are high levels of public mobilisation and low levels of state consolidation, elites are more vulnerable to Pan-Arab or Pan-Islamic opinion in foreign policy making'.⁸⁰ Such a claim draws a parallel with Malik Mufti's research on the ways in which Arabism was instrumentalized by policymakers dealing with the problems of state formation in terms of Arab state leaders' project of forging autonomy and legitimacy.⁸¹ He improves the school of balancing within the neorealist tradition by 'tracing the evolution of stateness', linking 'the development of foreign policy behaviour to the development of domestic political institutions' in support of his argument: 'The transition from foreign policies driven primarily by internal consideration ... to foreign policies driven primarily by external consideration ... mirrors the formation of stronger states in Iraq and Syria'.⁸² For Hinnebusch, while drawing on a subaltern

⁷⁸ Raymond Hinnebusch, *The International Politics of the Middle East* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 62.

⁷⁹ Hinnebusch, 64–65.

⁸⁰ Hinnebusch, 92.

⁸¹ Malik Mufti, *Sovereign Creations: Pan-Arabism and Political Order in Syria and Iraq* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 5–6.

⁸² Mufti, 9.

neorealist concept of omni-balancing to explain foreign policymaking,⁸³ he maintains that state elites tend to ‘omni-balance’ various levels of challenges in ‘attempting to reconcile demands from domestic actors with threats or constraints from external powers’.⁸⁴ Even though the significance of the domestic level has been noted by this approach, it nonetheless sees the extent to which ideas influence foreign policy as determined by the role of state elites. It presumes there is state autonomy in the process of state formation and the practice of omni-balancing by following a neorealist sense of taking a ‘state-centric’ and ‘top-down approach’ to this issue.

1.3.3 Historical sociology: relocating ideas in social change

The third approach to ideas in IRME can be traced back to the reflection on ‘Orientalism’ in area studies that rejects cultural and religious essentialist accounts of the Middle East. It takes a more historical and sociological stance that never accepts ‘religious and cultural convention as independent forces operating across history’ or ‘a given [and] constant source’.⁸⁵ Ideas have mostly been conceptualised as ideologies related to social relations in which the dominant and dominated groups in social, political and economic fields need to be noticed. As Halliday argues, ‘these ideologies may be those of groups resisting established states, and calling for alternative forms of government, or those of established states, seeking to reinforce their claim to legitimacy’.⁸⁶ In this regard, the provenance and significance of ideas are not as claimed by IR constructivism, i.e. deriving from a monolithic structural norm. Rather, ideas correspond to social formation, usually underlain by certain forms of the mode of production, and they are best understood as social instances articulated on economic

⁸³ The concept of ‘omni-balancing’ has been credited with meriting the assumption of ‘balance of power’ in balancing threats, revised to be applied in the case of developing states. Concerning the ‘distinctiveness’ of developing states, the regime’s weak legitimacy and the artificiality of the state, Stephen David argues that the framework of conventional balance of power offers inadequate accounts for developing states’ alignment. He therefore suggests shifting the spotlight from the external threats and capabilities of the state to internal threats and interests of the leader/regime. In the pursuit of regime survival, the choice of alignment is eventually led by considering which aligning partner would benefit to preserve its power rather than which one would enhance state interests as a whole. See David, ‘Explaining Third World Alignment’.

⁸⁴ Hinnebusch, *The International Politics of the Middle East*, 93.

⁸⁵ Halliday, *The Middle East in International Relations: Power, Politics and Ideology*, 195.

⁸⁶ Halliday, 196.

and political levels.⁸⁷ As such, the investigation of ideas needs to incorporate the social and domestic context by which one could explicate, as Ewan Stein suggests, how ideas in the Middle East emanate along with the rising middle class and intellectuals who challenge the old socio-political and economic orders.⁸⁸ By doing so, ‘a distorted picture of ideas’ given by IR constructivism, seeing Arabism and sovereignty norm as essentially conflicting and overlooking ‘the second image’, can be amended.⁸⁹

The primary rationale of such a historical sociological lens focuses on contestation or cooperation on the societal and domestic levels. Though historical sociologists have never denied the efficacy of the international structural factors of states, they emphasise the significance of domestic and societal factors in their explanations of foreign policy. In this regard, the unitary, monolithic and systemic sense of state embedded in the international structure has dissolved into a more complex and fluid domestic and societal context.⁹⁰ In terms of ideas and foreign policy, the context that historical sociologists explore does not refer to an ideational base in the IR constructivist rationale or cultural idiosyncratic traits in orientalist readings. Instead, it is based upon a historicised understanding of a variety of social forces, institutional settings and the interaction between regimes and societies.

In light of this approach, the relationship of ideas and foreign policy has been revisited by shedding light on, for example, the intellectual division of labour in foreign policy.⁹¹ Identity is not ‘momentarily fixed’ nor understood through ‘the somewhat teleological view of national identity as shifting from Arabism to statism’.⁹² Ideas, as Stein argues, ‘generated by intellectuals associated with socio-political movements in opposition are not marginal to those employed by a government or regime, but are part of the overall interpretive framework in which foreign policy is

⁸⁷ Nicos Poulantzas, *Political Power and Social Classes*, trans. Timothy O’Hagan (London: Verso, 1978), 15.

⁸⁸ Stein, ‘Beyond Arabism vs. Sovereignty: Relocating Ideas in the International Relations of the Middle East’.

⁸⁹ Stein, 895 and 902.

⁹⁰ Halliday, *The Middle East in International Relations: Power, Politics and Ideology*, 27–30.

⁹¹ Stein, ‘The “Camp David Consensus”: Ideas, Intellectuals, and the Division of Labor in Egypt’s Foreign Policy toward Israel’.

⁹² Stein, 739.

made'.⁹³ As such, the ways in which ideas influence foreign policy depends on the ideological linkage of state leaders to civil society. Whether state foreign policy, taking Egypt for example, was a question of interpreting Israel as imperialism through a discourse of encouraging popular revolution and Arab unification under Nasserism,⁹⁴ or Sadat's composite perception of Israel as another antagonistic state,⁹⁵ the ideologies behind it developed along with various intellectual trends being represented in societal movements. These ideologies shifted with the dynamic interaction between societal groups and the regime and created Egyptians' conception of Israel and the 'double-instrumentalisation' of foreign policy for both intellectuals and the government.⁹⁶ This historical sociologist attempt, as shown by Stein's research on Egyptian foreign policy towards Israel, sheds new light on the examination of state-society relations in explaining both ideas and foreign policy. It not only adjusts the dominant 'state-centric' approach in IR taken by Barnett and Hinnebusch, but also reconsiders the identity approach.

From the above discussion, it is argued that the current debate on the approach to ideas in the Middle East is neither a conventional epistemological debate between the disciplines of social science and area specialization, nor one of differences between analytical levels. As universal tools were used by historical sociologists in analysing international relations in the Middle East, the debate no longer focused on existing disciplinary boundaries. The primary concern is now with a perennial debate within social science: how one understands the relationship between agents and social structure, and the essence of ideas and structure. Even though Barnett once asserted that disciplinary history makes constructivism distinctive from historical sociology, regarding different theoretical agendas, he has nonetheless admitted the contribution of historical sociology to IR constructivism.⁹⁷ But what he has done in understanding

⁹³ Stein, 740.

⁹⁴ Stein, 740–43.

⁹⁵ Stein, 745.

⁹⁶ Stein, 754–55.

⁹⁷ As Barnett argues, 'constructivists and historical sociologists took aim at different phenomena.' The former is to adjust systematic approach in IR that omits 'value-added' impact; the latter aims to explore the impact of social change, e.g. industrialisation, state formation, democratisation, capitalism etc. The way in which historical sociology adds value to IR constructivists has three dimensions: the first is to take state-society relations as a rigorous theoretical tool into account; the second is to draw on more substantive political economy in which both 'high politics' and 'low politics' can be

the origins of ideas is still constrained within the mainstream IR disciplinary tradition: taking the interstate level as the major analytical locus and alluding to the compartmentalisation of international and domestic levels, and material and ideational factors. It makes IR constructivists somehow distort their understanding of ideas, and not fully unpack sociological insights as they have claimed.

To substantiate an explanation that resonates with other histories of Arab nationalism, as proposed earlier, the origins and formatting process of Arab nationalism and its influence on foreign policy need to be further contextualized along with a broader sociopolitical dynamic on international, regional and domestic levels. As such, I abandon IR constructivist and eclecticist approaches that uncritically adopt the notion of Arabism, accept a subaltern neorealist reading of omni-balancing and assume the autonomy of state leaders in making foreign policy. Instead, I follow the traditions of historical sociology by which this thesis sets out a historical sociological investigation of the case of Bahrain. It examines how internal sociopolitical dynamics, corresponding to regional and international social changes, drives Arab nationalism in the Bahraini context and generates social drivers for Bahrain's regional policy.

1.4 Methodology

To examine the social bases of the formation of Arab nationalism and Bahrain's regional policy, the primary rationale of my methodological approach lies at the heart of the traditions of historical sociology and its merits with respect to IRME. It seeks to explore 'the interplay of meaningful actions and structural contexts' and shed light on 'the particular and varying features of specific kinds of social structure and patterns of change' in time and space.⁹⁸ However, this thesis does not intend to define itself as a work on the intellectual history of Arab nationalism or conventional FPA. Instead, it places itself at the interface of historical sociology and IR in such a way that Gramsci's work is reappraised and reconstructed as a viable historical sociological framework for

reconsidered; the third is to avoid economic reductionism. See Michael Barnett, 'Historical Sociology and Constructivism: An Estranged Past, a Federated Future?', in *Historical Sociology of International Relations*, ed. Stephen Hobden and John M. Hobson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 102–5.

⁹⁸ Theda Skocpol, 'Sociology's Historical Imagination', in *Vision and Method in Historical Sociology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 1.

ideology and foreign policy in the Middle East. The following subsections detail my consideration of case selection, analytical approach and the data.

1.4.1 Case selection: why Bahrain?

The reasons why Bahrain is selected as a case study in my investigation of the relationship of Arab nationalism and regional policy derive from an overall reconsideration of the political histories of Bahrain in three aspects.

First, as the third section of this chapter outlines, the study of foreign policy in the Gulf tends to assume a commonality shared among the Gulf Arab monarchies. Based on such an understanding, the Gulf Arab monarchies have been seen as a sub-regional bloc in IRME scholarship. The significance of sectarian identity to state foreign policy has been overestimated and resonated to a certain extent with IR constructivism. Bahrain has never been a major case in the study of foreign policy. It has always been referred to as a quintessential case of sectarian conflict due to its polarised population being quite between religious sects. This approach to Bahraini politics has gained currency recently by alluding to dichotomous state-society relations on the basis of primordial sectarianism. However, while taking a closer look at coteremporary political histories of Bahrain, it might be surprising to find that the case of Bahrain instead offers a counter-argument to the existing sectarian understanding as most sociopolitical movements from the 1930s onwards have continuously called for labour rights, decolonisation, political participation and national unity. These elements open up an avenue for further examination of other histories of Arab nationalism. The vigorous intellectual movements and their influence on contemporary Bahraini politics contribute useful empirical material for noteworthy theoretical alternatives beyond the compartmentalisation of social relations. More importantly, this empirical material then resonates with Gramsci's observations of intellectuals, ideologies and political struggles.

Furthermore, the Bahraini case provides an alternative and particular empirical case of Arab nationalism and foreign policy in terms of its non-revolutionary process of state formation. Unlike Egypt, Syria and Iraq that went through a revolutionary process of decolonisation and independence in the 1950s and '60s, revolving around nuanced versions of Arab nationalism, Bahrain has never been through an identical

one. Therefore, most studies of Arab nationalism and its influence on state foreign policy usually refer to the quintessential cases of Nasserism or Ba'athism and overlook the Gulf region whose empirical merits are mostly presented through the lens of rentier state theory. The existing understanding of Arab nationalism and foreign policy has been closely tied to and only represented by so-called radical Arab states, rather than moderate ones. This derives from an impression that the relation between Arab nationalism and foreign policy has been mediated and formed by powerful military figures. Having this articulation with an anti-imperialist and socialist agenda, these figures were able to deliver their political wills by linking themselves to the people in a populist fashion. However, in the Bahraini case, from the British colonial era to the first decade of the independence phase, as will be shown in the rest of the thesis, there was never a strong ideological linkage between the regime and the people that revolved around Arab nationalism as the collective national will. As such, this left a conundrum concerning how to locate Arab nationalism in such a non-revolutionary context and thus the impact of Arab nationalism on the foreign policy of the post-colonial state that historically maintained a rather close relationship with the West.

The third reason for choosing Bahrain relates to the primary question presented earlier in this chapter: what explains a Gulf Arab state's policy toward regional alignment in the independence phase, especially after 1967? Bahrain offers useful historical evidence and material showing the histories of the rise of the New Arab Left and its comprehensive impact on Bahrain and international relations in the Gulf. Such histories, as will be examined in chapters 4 and 5, present alternative accounts of the development of Arab nationalism. While this new political momentum was infused into nationalist movements, it also qualitatively changed the ideological connections among the regime, intellectuals and the people, and then had an impact on Bahrain's state formation in the independence phase. This process was conditioned by British colonial history and Bahrain's late-coming capitalist development. Nonetheless, it also evolved along with the struggle among different social forces that were interrelated to contingencies around Bahrain's regional policy in the 1970s and then paved the way to Bahrain's participation in the GCC in 1981.

In sum, the case of Bahrain offers empirical alternatives to the existing understanding of Arab nationalism and regional policy. Also, it provides historical

evidence for exploring the social bases of ideologies, foreign policy and, more broadly, international relations in a post-colonial and non-revolutionary context through a Gramscian lens.

1.4.2 Analytical approach

This research follows the principle of a small N case study, it proposes to offer an in-depth explanation of the selected case and to show its particularities. It also adopts a historical method, a research method that has been widely used in social and political studies and provides insights into the topic of social change.

In conducting a small N case study, this thesis plans to combine two strategies to examine the case of Bahrain. The first strategy is to define historical conditions by historicizing and process-tracing the collected data. It employs analytical history by using data from different sources that help to historicize the causes and consequences of critical political events and their fallout around which are the struggles between different social forces. I use ‘process-tracing’ to explore how these events became critical junctures of social formation, which nurtured the milieu in which the articulation among political and social instances qualitatively changed. Such a method usually refers to ‘a technique in which the analyst attempts to locate a causal mechanism linking a hypothesized explanatory variable to an outcome’.⁹⁹ For this thesis, I instead argue that such a mechanism is best conceptualised in a societal context, substantiated by the pattern of late-coming capitalist social formation and maintaining a space for explaining the significance of social agents. As will be shown later, in chapter 2, it is best understood through the concept of ‘development’ whose characteristics of a late-coming capitalist state in a (post-)colonial context underlie the social basis for the evolution of ideologies and the interaction among different social agents presented in each chapter of this thesis. However, it is not meant to offer a deterministic explanation of Bahrain’s regional policy nor to argue over the relations of Arab nationalism and foreign policy dominated by development.

⁹⁹ James Mahoney, ‘Strategies of Causal Inference in Small-N Analysis’, *Sociological Methods and Research* 28, no. 4 (2000): 409.

Therefore, the second strategy is to take historical contingencies into consideration. Such contingencies, I argue, derive from the process of political struggle and events that are beyond the Bahraini social context but sometimes have a decisive impact on how Bahrain's regional policy is formulated in response to different situations. The policy cannot be fully explained by the logic of a rational omnibalancing strategy or patrimonial cultural norms. Rather, it intertwines with historical legacies (conditions) and sometimes leads to unexpected consequences. But how contingent is the case of Bahraini regional policy towards Gulf alignments? Or how do conditions and contingencies go hand in hand in the case of Bahrain? These questions constitute the basic methodological consideration throughout this thesis and reflect Karl Marx's statement that,

Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past.¹⁰⁰

My answers to these questions will be fleshed out as the thesis proceeds, with more elaboration of Gramscian theoretical insights applied to the case of Bahrain. I argue that while Gramsci's insights are inherited from the tradition of a revolutionary socialist understanding of historical materialism, his exploration of the political aspect of social formation, especially the struggles among agents who represent different social forces, does offer ground for us to explain the interplay between conditions and contingencies. A critical instance is the role of revolutionary Arab nationalists, the New Arab Left, and their struggle with Al Khalifa. Their rise writes a new chapter in the histories of Arab nationalism in a context of decolonisation and anti-imperialism, one seeking fundamental change to the existing sociopolitical establishment. Some of the instances of the rise can be traced back to the British colonial era and the context of the rise is conditioned by the large scale of capitalist social formation. But as will be shown, mainly in chapter 6, the influence of Arab nationalism on Bahraini regional policy is contingent on the dynamic struggles among different forces on the national, regional and international levels. In other words, while attempting to explain the relationship of Arab nationalism and Bahraini regional policy towards Gulf alignments,

¹⁰⁰ Karl Marx, 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte', 1852, 5, Marxist Internet Archives, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/18th-Brumaire.pdf>.

I consider political struggle as an essential societal context in which this thesis investigates the impact of ideology on foreign policy.

1.4.3 The Data

To explain the forming process of Arab nationalism and its relationship with Bahrain's regional policy, this thesis uses both primary and secondary data sources. For secondary sources, I mainly draw on some historians' work on the Gulf, especially Bahrain. '[History] encourages a widening of one's view to embrace epochal pivotal events in the development of social structure'.¹⁰¹ As such, these scholarly narratives on and understandings of the history of sociopolitical events relating to early capitalist formation in the Gulf set the backdrop for my analysis of the Bahraini independence phase. It is the phase in which the primary data points begin, from 1971 to 1981. Although using secondary data is quite common in historical sociological studies, one must be cautious and avoid 'be[ing] dictated [to] simply by historiographical fashion' and 'be very systematic in searching through historical literature'.¹⁰² To this end, this thesis, by using primary data, not only adds empirical evidence to current explanations of some crucial historical events, but also offers an alternative type of data to test existing research findings.

Regarding primary data, they are from two major sources. First, they are from three types of archival data: official documents, press data and revolutionary pamphlets. These official documents have been declassified by the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and are now preserved at the National Archives, London. From the telegrams and reports on the internal and external political situation in Bahrain in the 1970s, I mainly focus the data search on the conversations between British diplomats to Bahrain and some important figures in the Al Khalifa regime, which give information about how Al Khalifa saw and evaluated certain sociopolitical events. The FCO documents have been used widely in Middle Eastern studies and are recognised as an important primary data source by scholars analysing domestic politics and foreign relations in the Gulf.

¹⁰¹ Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, 143.

¹⁰² Skocpol, 'Sociology's Historical Imagination', 382.

However, as these documents usually address a very subjective and selective view of British diplomats on Al Khalifa, a full picture might be lost. Therefore, I also use press data, particularly on official statements by Al Khalifa that were published in pro-government newspapers and collected from the British Library and the Arab World Documentation Unit (AWDU) in the Old Library, Exeter University. If the secondary data from existing research by scholars of Middle Eastern studies offer a basic historical understanding of and a perspective on socio-political development in the Gulf, the primary data from the archives then lead me to delve into the details of the struggle around Arab nationalism in Bahrain. For this part, revolutionary pamphlets are crucial to elaborate on the political agenda of the New Arab Left from which this thesis identifies ideological instances of what I call counter-hegemonic forces. These pamphlets are collected from different archives, including the AWDU, the British Library and the Halliday Collection at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). They were mainly compiled, translated from Arabic and published in English by the Gulf Committee, an organisation established by students and intellectuals based in London in support of the Gulf revolution in the 1970s.¹⁰³

The second source of primary data comes is semi-structured interviews which were conducted in *Manama* in December 2015 and January 2016. They mainly rely on oral histories given, first, by those who were politically involved in social and political movements during the 1970s and affiliated to varying extents to the New Arab Left; and second, by an important retired government figure who was an Arab nationalist and put in a crucial position in the Bahraini government in the 1970s. The interview data serve as complementary material to archival data, and they expand my analyses of the ideological development of Arab nationalism and its relation to Bahraini politics and regional policy. They fill a gap left by archival data in terms of constructing a more complete picture of Bahraini political development in the 1970s, which might not be extracted only from FCO documents.

¹⁰³ For the role of the Gulf Committee as an overseas revolutionary voice for the Gulf revolution, see chapter 3 of this thesis.

1.5 Overview of the Thesis' Organisation and Argument

As the preceding sections show, this introductory chapter has raised a research question about the relationship of Arab nationalism and the regional policy of Arab states in the post-1967 phase. It has reviewed how the existing literature of IRME scholarship has addressed the relationship of Arab nationalism and, more broadly, ideas and foreign policy in the Middle East through different approaches. Also, I have stated that this thesis attempts to revisit the question through the case of Bahrain in the 1970s by following the traditions of historical sociology, particularly Marxist or historical materialist insights from Gramsci. My answer is clear: resonating with Amin among others, the significance of Arab nationalism in international relations in the Middle East can be reappraised through other histories which show that Arab nationalism has not died out after the setback of 1967. Neither has its political influence on international relations in the Middle East or state regional policy in particular diminished. Instead, I argue that Arab nationalism in the post-1967 phase evolved with the struggles among different social forces, and its influence on state policy on regional alignment can be best understood through a Gramscian lens. In support of such an argument, the rest of the thesis sets out its empirical and theoretical analyses.

Chapter 2 explicates the theoretical framework of Gramsci and conceptualises some key terms informed by Gramsci that are applied to the case of Bahrain. It suggests that the existing Gramscian approach to IR, be that of Robert Cox, needs to be modified beyond compartmentalisation of the national and international sphere for conducting historical sociological research. Following some scholarly reappraisal of Gramsci's ideas, I reformulate the Coxian brand of Gramsci and further reconstruct three key concepts – development, ideology and struggle. For 'development', it aims to reconsider Gramsci on international relations, which is not noted in the Coxian approach. I argue that Gramsci's own understanding of international relations can be encapsulated in the concept of 'the international'. It is substantiated by his acknowledgement of the characteristics of unevenness and a combination of capitalist social formation, which also resonates with the recent revival IR historical materialist claims. It is then represented in his analysis of the process of state formation of late-

coming capitalist states. The concept of development underlies how Gramsci cashed out the other two concepts of ideology and struggled within a specific national context by highlighting the role of other social agents, i.e. intellectuals, and the significance of the political aspects of social formation. These two concepts then help this thesis unpack a historical process in which the struggles among different social forces in the post-colonial phase shaped a societal context in which Arab nationalism influenced Bahrain's policy toward regional alignment. The three interrelated theoretical concepts are integrated and correspond, respectively, to each of the following empirical analyses in chapters 3 to 5.

Chapter 3 gives an overview of Bahraini Arab nationalism and social formation under British colonialism. It seeks a marriage between the theoretical concept of development and the emergence of different social forces around the rise of Arab nationalism in Bahrain. In this chapter, I further substantiate the concept of development and its application to nationalism by drawing on Tom Nairn's thesis. I argue that the early formation of Arab nationalism related to late-coming capitalist social formation in peripheral areas outside Europe whose capitalist sociality was realized through colonialist tutelage. While the characteristics of uneven and combined development led to nationalism as a modern ideology, they also created polarised and contradictory social forces around the evolution of Arab nationalism in Bahrain. For this, I further argue that these forces then generated the political aspects of Bahraini social formation. These aspects were shot through with two polarised and contradictory ideological currents. Conceived in a Gramscian lens, there was the ruling class's willed ideology informed by the British colonial lens on the one hand. The subordinate class's organic ideology cradled in Bahraini civil society along with a series of labour and nationalist movements between the 1930s and the 1960s were on the other. More importantly, the disconnection between the two and the continuing struggles among different forces then set a context in which the thesis further examines the evolution of Arab nationalism and its ideological ties to Bahraini internal sociopolitical dynamics and policy in the following chapters.

Chapter 4 follows the rationale of bringing other histories of Arab nationalism into IR through a Gramscian approach and mainly corresponds to the second reconstructed theoretical concept of ideology. It outlines the rise of the New Arab Left

as the major counter-hegemonic force of Arab nationalism. It historicises the context in which, and why and how, the New Arab Left created alternative social forces to the Arab nationalist movement (ANM) since the 1960s. It explains the ways in which Bahraini New Arab Left intellectuals were informed by Marxist-Leninist ideas practised in Aden and Dhofar. Also, it focuses on the political agenda of the Popular Front of Bahrain (PFB), also known as the People's Front in Bahrain, and their leading role as counter-hegemonic intellectuals while Shia political activism rose up. I argue, in the last section of chapter 4, that the political leadership of the New Arab Left intellectuals as counter-hegemony against the Al Khalifa regime was rather fractured due to their ambiguous alliance relations with some religious groups and the setback of Marxist-Leninist revolutions in Arabia in the 1970s. As a result, unified counter-hegemonic forces were difficult to organise around the idea of Arab nationalism as the national-popular collective will in Bahrain, especially in the Parliament (1973–1975) and after its dissolution until the outbreak of the Iranian Revolution.

To examine the influence of the rise of the New Arab Left in Bahrain, and more broadly in the Gulf, chapter 5 carries on investigating the last theoretical concept of struggle. It offers my explanation of the political dynamics in Bahrain from Bahrain's formal independence in 1971 to the dissolution of Parliament in 1975. Through Gramsci's theorisation of passive revolution, I argue that Al Khalifa's political reforms as a means of reconstructing its hegemonic status in this period ended up being an 'interrupted historical restoration'. As a result, Al Khalifa's rule rested on an 'incomplete hegemonic state of Bahrain' for which the regime relied only on coercion without consent. Moreover, its ideological disconnection from the people remained as it had done in the British colonial phase. In other words, Al Khalifa's willed ideology failed to link to the organic ideology of Bahraini civil society but was still practised through a colonial lens inherited from British colonialism. While the New Arab Left found it difficult to organise stronger counter-hegemonic forces, and Al Khalifa did not seek the consent of the Bahraini people, I further argue that Arab nationalism in the second half of the 1970s can be seen as a 'floating national-popular will'. It failed to resolve the existing political struggles among those social forces and then had an impact on the ideological development of Arab nationalism and its ties to Bahrain's policy toward regional alignment during this period.

As the final empirical chapter of this thesis, chapter 6 examines Bahrain's policy toward regional alignment in the 1970s, with references to the findings from chapters 3 to 5. It particularly focuses on the historical process of Al Khalifa's dilemma in making a contentious alignment with the US followed by an alternative choice of participating in the GCC. To reflect the section on my review of different accounts of Gulf alignment employed by various approaches of threat and security, collaborative regime survival, and norms and identity, I argue that the relationship of Arab nationalism and state policy towards regional alignment is best understood as a political struggle between different social forces around contestation of the 'subject' of sovereignty rather than the 'norm' of sovereignty. The former addresses the contestation over who represents and practises Bahraini sovereignty, whereas the latter, as IR constructivism has shown, refers to a normatively essential conflict between Arab nationalism and sovereignty. Such a contestation of the subject of Bahraini sovereignty, I further argue, was as a result of an unresolved political struggle in Bahrain and then the absence of an organised national-popular collective will around Arab nationalism, especially after the dissolution of Parliament in 1975. Furthermore, it was also related more broadly to Bahrain's policy on the Palestinian question, the Iranian Revolution and the Iran-Iraq war in an overarching ideological context informed by counter-hegemonic forces of the New Arab Left. However, while these conditions were a dilemma for Al Khalifa in seeking alignment with the US, a series of extended regional issues in the second half of the 1970s did, nonetheless, open up alternative alignment choices that eventually led Bahrain to participate in the GCC in 1981. On this point, chapter 6 presents a more complex historical and sociological understanding of the relationship of Arab nationalism and state regional policy than existing analyses.

Chapter 7 concludes this thesis. It recaps the findings of this thesis and reflects on some implications for potential further research. The chapter reiterates that the framework of Gramsci, reconstructed through three basic interrelated concepts informed by himself and late Gramscian scholars, provides a viable lens through which the relationship of Arab nationalism and state foreign policy, and more broadly international relations in the Gulf, can be best understood through political struggle. Furthermore, it also proposes that such a framework, if its usefulness has been

successfully demonstrated through the case of Bahrain, may open up potential avenues for future research on IRME and, more broadly, the study of historical sociology of international relations (HSIR). These claims would be over-ambitious if they did not have enough empirical and theoretical support, for which this thesis now starts its analyses, beginning with a presentation of the theoretical framework of Gramsci.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF GRAMSCI: DEVELOPMENT, IDEOLOGY AND STRUGGLE

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework of this thesis, one taking an alternative approach to current understandings of the relationship of Arab nationalism and state policy towards regional alignment in the Middle East. It draws on the insights of Antonio Gramsci to conduct a historical sociological investigation of the case of Bahrain, with a focus on what formed Bahrain's policy towards Gulf alignment and its interplay with the formation and evolution of Arab nationalism in the 1970s.

Within the discipline of International Relations (IR), the usefulness of Gramsci has been introduced to IR students through Robert Cox, among others, since the 1980s.¹⁰⁴ While intervening in the debate among mainstream IR theories on the issue of the international order, Cox offers a historical IR materialist perspective, pointing to the significance of social forces and hegemony. As will be shown, however, this chapter does not fully embrace the Coxian application to IR. Instead, the insights of Gramsci represented in this chapter, and throughout this thesis, take a great deal from other historical materialists who have recently revisited Gramsci's own understanding of politics and international relations.¹⁰⁵ Their reconceptualization of Gramsci informs a way of problematizing and de-compartmentalising the existing analytical boundaries of the national-international, material-ideational and political-social factors employed

¹⁰⁴ Robert W. Cox, 'Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 10, no. 2 (1981): 126–55; Robert W. Cox, 'Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay in Method', in *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations*, ed. Stephen Gill (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 49–66; Stephen Gill, *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

¹⁰⁵ Adam David Morton, 'Waiting for Gramsci: State Formation, Passive Revolution and the International', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 35, no. 3 (2007): 597–621; Adam David Morton, 'The Continuum of Passive Revolution', *Capital and Class* 34, no. 3 (2010): 315–42; Andreas Bieler, Ian Bruff, and Adam David Morton, 'Gramsci and "the International": Past, Present and Future', in *Antonio Gramsci*, ed. Mark McNally (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 137–55; Peter Thomas, 'Modernity as "Passive Revolution": Gramsci and the Fundamental Concepts of Historical Materialism', *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 17, no. 2 (2006): 61–78; Peter Thomas, 'Gramsci and the Intellectuals: Modern Prince Versus Passive Revolution', in *Marxism, Intellectuals and Politics*, ed. David Bates (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 68–85; Peter Thomas, *The Gramscian Moment: Philosophy, Hegemony and Marxism* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2009); Peter Thomas, 'Hegemony, Passive Revolution and the Modern Prince', *Thesis Eleven* 117, no. 1 (2013): 20–39; Roccu, 'Gramsci in Cairo: Neoliberal Authoritarianism, Passive Revolution and Failed Hegemony in Egypt under Mubarak, 1991–2010'; De Smet, *Gramsci on Tahrir: Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Egypt*.

by Cox. Moreover, they rectify the Coxian blind side on state-society relations and their interplay with international capitalist social formation. While the role of ideas in international relations has been mostly anatomised through the Hobbesian, Lockean or Kantian logics practised by states in the international arena,¹⁰⁶ Gramscian works instead examine ideas as ideologies situated in a social totality that relate to different social forces on the national, regional and international scales.

Following a version of Gramsci reappraised in a recent historical materialist investigation, this chapter mainly refers to ideas as ideologies rather than identities, seeing Arab nationalism as a type of modern ideology linked to domestic, regional and international sociopolitical dynamics. As a historical and sociological product of colonialism and capitalist social formation, Arab nationalism became a crucial ideological component of intellectual and popular movements in the Middle East, especially in the first half of the twentieth century. Its origins relate to the emergence of new social forces of capitalist formation. Furthermore, its evolution constantly corresponded to the political struggle between ‘civil society’ and ‘political society’, the people and the state. In this political struggle, intellectuals usually play critical roles in the articulation of political and social instances, and the ideological linkage between state and people in sociopolitical formation. In a Gramscian sense, the extent to which intellectuals could as such fulfil the task impacted on whether a stable ‘historical bloc’ could be established and a top-down political reform could be successful under the pressure of state geopolitical and capitalist competition. If not, an ideological disconnection remains between the people and the state. An ideological integral state cannot be imposed on civil society through persuasion and consent, only through coercion. Therefore, when a revolutionary moment comes at a historical juncture of state formation, the dominant class might have difficulty in integrating its world view with that of civil society. To a post-colonial capitalist state, the dominant class is usually swamped by the struggles between different social forces and then faced with the dilemma of making state policy towards regional alignment within the orbit of the Western security pact.

¹⁰⁶ Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

It is in this context that this thesis examines the relationship of Arab nationalism and state regional policy, and through it that this chapter seeks to establish a Gramscian framework for the case of Bahrain in the 1970s.

The present chapter describes a framework via Gramsci's insights into politics and international relations, it offers a historical sociological account of Bahrain's policy towards regional alignment and its interplay with Arab nationalism. It begins with a review of the Coxian contribution and critiques of it from other later historical materialists who seek to clarify Gramsci's ideas. Following a reappraisal of Gramsci as a particular historical sociological approach drawing on historical materialism for this thesis, I reconstruct three interrelated concepts of Gramsci based on which I propose a historical sociological framework for the case of Bahrain: development, ideology and struggle. I then further explicate the notion of these concepts and how they are to be employed in the case of Bahrain. Even though this chapter proposes a theoretical framework to understand the relationship between ideologies and state regional policy, it does not intend to offer an explanation of their interplay by deploying positivist connotations. Rather, it seeks mainly to theorise how political struggle between different social forces mediates the relationship of ideologies and state regional policy, more specifically that of Arab nationalism and Bahrain's policy towards regional alignment, through an integration of historical sociology and Gramsci. In doing so, the chapter follows a historical materialist rationale of examining such an interplay in a broader historical and sociological context and theorises how social drivers influence international relations in the Gulf through a Gramscian lens.

2.1 Reconsidering Gramsci in International Relations

As the introductory chapter has shown, scholarly attempts to explain ideas in international relations in the Middle East have been mostly influenced by a cultural turn in IR ever since the 1990s, referring to ideas as identity and norms. If this thesis attempts to give alternative accounts through a Gramscian lens, how does it respond to existing constructivist critiques? What is left by the Coxian approach? And what is the rationale and necessity for a theoretical reconstruction of Gramsci in IRME? These

are the questions that this section tries to answer, and then it reconsiders the application of Gramsci to IR.

2.1.1 *Historical materialism vs IR constructivism on ideas*

For decades, IR constructivism has been a well-known and oft-adopted approach to ideas in IR on the basis of its critiques of neorealism and historical materialism. Among these critiques of historical materialism, IR constructivism criticises mainly the theoretical status of historical materialism as a reductionist-economic theory. It argues that historical materialists fail to capture ‘the character of social and political phenomena, including capitalism’.¹⁰⁷ As for Alexander Wendt, he admits that the material nature is represented in ‘forces of production’ but nonetheless sees ‘relations of production’, i.e. capitalist relations, as a cultural form of ‘shot through ideas’.¹⁰⁸ Yet, his attack on historical materialism ‘depends on a question-begging and narrow counter-position of the ideal and the material’ in the ways that he reduces the relations of production to institutions or rules, and ontologically compartmentalizes ideal-material relations by overweighting ideas.¹⁰⁹ Wendt’s attack shows his misreading of historical materialism. As Alex Callinicos argues, ‘the relations of production are not reducible to institutions or rules’ that are representations of cultural forms or ideas; from human history, we can see that ‘wage-labour can be institutionalized in various forms, *differentiated*, for example, according to the degree to which ‘*extra-economic coercion*’ is involved’.¹¹⁰ This ‘extra-economic coercion’ stems from the completion among states by which one impacts on another, and in which ‘the relationality of capital’ identifies itself in historical materialism.¹¹¹ In short, the representation of historical materialism in Marx is much more complicated than how Wendt understands it.

¹⁰⁷ Benno Teschke and Christian Heine, ‘The Dialectic of Globalisation: A Critique of Social Constructivism’, in *Historical Materialism and Globalisation*, ed. Mark Rupert and Hazel Smith (London: Routledge, 2002), 167–68.

¹⁰⁸ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 94–95.

¹⁰⁹ Alex Callinicos, *Imperialism and Global Political Economy* (Cambridge: Polity, 2009), 94.

¹¹⁰ Emphasis added. Callinicos, 94.

¹¹¹ Callinicos, 95.

If Wendt's intention in doing so is to challenge the statement that there are always universalized national interests for state survival in the international arena, his research agenda, nonetheless, gives ideas an explanatory primacy for defining national interests and sees the social ties among states as causal consequences of practised ideas. This rationale, as shown earlier in chapter 1, has signposted an approach for IR scholars on ideas in the Middle East. The ways in which states perceive politics have been determined by how state leaders progress 'dialogues' on the basis of a shared identity embedded in a cultural normative structure.¹¹² Such a view gives more weight to ideational factors than material ones, to the international than the domestic level. Furthermore, Arab nationalism has been conceived in an analytically and socially constructed term as Arabism in IRME. Its ideational incompatibility with modern sovereignty norms sets out different world views and rules for states in the international arena and leads to their divergent behaviours. This ideational conflict has then substantiated the argument that Bahraini and Gulf politics can be explained by the conflict deriving from distinctive sectarian identities, notably the conflict between Sunni and Shia Muslims.

But from a historical materialist perspective, what Wendt overlooks is the class antagonism displaced by identifying national interests.¹¹³ As such, investigation of the linkage of ideational and material factors must be placed within comprehensive but sophisticated and dynamic social relations, seeing a dialectical relationship between them. Specifically as regards the case of Bahrain, a much deeper materialistic socio-political structure needs be analytically juxtaposed with ideas in a representation of social relations. Moving beyond this compartmentalisation of ideational and material factors facilitates an analysis proceeding with what Fred Halliday called a 'necessary encounter' between historical materialism and IR, if offers an alternative antidote to explain ideas in international relations in both a historical and a sociological sense.¹¹⁴ It then frees one from the fetishism of the widely accepted sectarian explanation of Bahraini and Gulf politics.

¹¹² Barnett, *Dialogue in Arab Politics: Negotiation in Regional Order*.

¹¹³ Callinicos, *Imperialism and Global Political Economy*, 99.

¹¹⁴ Halliday, *Rethinking International Relations*, 47–73.

Regardless of a more in-depth discussion of the contrast between these two theoretical paradigms, I purposely sketch out only the fundamental differences between IR constructivist and historical materialist understandings of ideas in international relations. But, how do IR historical materialists explain ideas beyond idealist and cultural accounts? This question leads the chapter to the following review of Robert Cox's attempt to bring Gramsci into IR.

2.1.2 Coxian attempt and its general critiques

As a seminal intervention into IR, Robert Cox is an important figure proposing a Gramscian framework for examining ideas in IR, especially in the field of International Political Economy (IPE), from the tradition of historical materialism. Cox identifies three constitutive elements of the configuration of forces in international relations: material capabilities, ideas and institutions, representing, respectively, 'forms of states', 'social forces' and 'world orders' among which no unitary causal relationship can be assumed but a reciprocal one.¹¹⁵ The dialectic relationship among these elements is, for Cox, predicated upon a particular historical structure to which it relates, and in which the rise of a rival structure represents 'alternative possibilities of development'.¹¹⁶ Ideas as social forces play a sufficient role, in conjunction with material capabilities and institutions, to establish a hegemony, an equivalent concept of stability, like Pax-Britannica in the nineteenth century or Pax-Americana in the twentieth century¹¹⁷. For Cox, ideas are taken as 'an historical structure', much like Gramsci's historical bloc, and 'collective images of social order' that register 'the nature and the legitimacy of prevailing power relations, the meanings of justice and public good'.¹¹⁸ In the mid-nineteenth century, for example, liberal internationalism underlay the global capitalism directed by Britain's hegemony in a universal form of 'comparative advantage, free trade and the gold standard'.¹¹⁹ But in the late-nineteenth century, Britain confronted the shift in the balance of power in Europe and the emergence of protectionism. Counter-hegemonic forces gradually undermined the

¹¹⁵ Cox, 'Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory', 136–38.

¹¹⁶ Cox, 137.

¹¹⁷ Cox, 139–40.

¹¹⁸ Cox, 136.

¹¹⁹ Cox, 'Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay in Method', 60.

established British historical bloc in the world.¹²⁰ These forces were created by the inter-ruling class in an international domain that shaped a global and transnational class structure beyond national boundaries.¹²¹ As a historical materialist attempt, Cox indeed sheds new light on the significance of ideas to IR in a picture of class relations in the international arena and substantiates his challenge to neorealist statements.

However, Cox's historical materialist explanation of international relations suffers from its critiques.¹²² He categorises historical materialism into two divergent forms by their methodological application: one he largely adopts is an emphasis on historical methods by reasoning social relations historically; the other one involves breaking away from historical knowledge and conceptualising the mode of production as a static analytical framework.¹²³ This categorisation of historical materialism serves his theoretical purpose of analysing the dialectic historical structure of international hegemony by shunning a complex analysis of the mode of production. That is, the historical and sociological meaning of mode of production is not fully appreciated in Cox. Moreover, Cox's application of Gramsci actually implants domestic logics by making an analogy and a 'transition' to international relations¹²⁴. Although, as Cox argues, Gramsci acknowledged that 'basic changes in international power relations or [the] world order, which are observed as changes in the military-strategic and geopolitical balance, can be traced to fundamental changes in social relations',¹²⁵ Cox takes *traced* as being more like a methodological meaning rather than an epistemological one. Thus, Cox takes the mode of production seen historically for granted and fails to recognise the expansionist nature of capitalism, a crucial sociological characteristic of international capitalist relations. As criticised by Benno Teschke, in Cox's work '[t]he attendant emphasis on inter-ruling class relations ... is

¹²⁰ Cox, 'Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory', 142.

¹²¹ Cox, 147–49.

¹²² In the same vein against a neorealist explanatory dominance in IR, Cox was considered by Wendt as 'materialist' social constructivist as Cox is more concerned with the role of ideas in IR than other historical materialists. For this, Wendt's interpretation of Cox, once again, derives from his misreading of historical materialist and Cox's own understanding of historical materialism itself, which is also subject to some historical materialist critiques. See Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 3 and 31.

¹²³ Cox, 'Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory', 133.

¹²⁴ Cox, 'Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay in Method', 58.

¹²⁵ Cox, 58.

radicalized by a failure to trace the geographical expansion of capitalism across a territorially preconstituted inter-state system, which is itself taken for granted, but described as being in place by the time of the Treaty of Westphalia'. As such, Cox also fails to include historical progress along with the 'protracted but progressive international expansion of the capital relation in its encounter with specific territorially contained correlations of social forces that gave rise to regionally specific resolutions of state-society relations'.¹²⁶

While overlooking the progress of expansion and the intrusion of capitalism into differentially located societies, unfortunately, Cox's proposal to bring ideas back into IR via historical materialism still fails to fully explicate the historical and sociological meaning of ideas in the international arena. Although he maintains that 'the problem of changing world order' and the place 'where a historical bloc can be founded' need to rely on explaining the national context,¹²⁷ he does not unpack further how the national context corresponds to international relations in forming a historical bloc. His omission of the national-international linkage and the secret of capitalism – its expansionist nature – seems to neglect one of the basic elements of historical materialism. It is to see social relations as a totality considering the dialectical relationship between the national and the international context, the material and ideational factors, and political and social instances. Actually, this is how Gramsci developed his understanding of historical materialism and thereby his elucidation of ideas in politics.

2.1.3 *Reconstruction of Gramsci*

If Cox's interpretation and application of Gramsci to IR seems problematic, why and how do I need to build up an alternative Gramscian framework to the Coxian one? A statement by Peter Thomas probably gives a reminder of the task of reconstructing Gramsci:

Gramsci's vision of Marxism insists upon its constitution as a political moment capable of explaining the historical emergence of all ideologies, including itself.

¹²⁶ Benno Teschke, 'Marxism', in *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, ed. Christian Rues-Smit and Duncan Snidal (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 175.

¹²⁷ Cox, 'Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay in Method', 64.

It is precisely in that sense, in terms of making the possibilities for social and political transformation that are immanent to existing forms of thought comprehensible, that a historical materialist interdisciplinary programme still has a contribution to make today.¹²⁸

As stated in the introductory chapter, this thesis attempts to revisit Arab nationalism in international relations in the Middle East in the post-1967 phase. By reconsidering other histories of Arab nationalism from below and around intellectual and popular movements, it then allows us to challenge and give alternative accounts, which ‘are immanent to existing forms of thought comprehensible’ but have been overlooked in terms addressing ‘a political moment’ in a different way, to the widely accepted argument of the demise of Arab nationalism after 1967 in the region.

However, as shown earlier, the simplified Coxian version of Gramsci seems insufficient to perform such a task. Some aspects of Gramsci have been overshadowed by his compartmentalisation of the totality of social relations. First, when Cox overlooks the expansionist nature of capitalism, he has already missed out the historical dimension of Gramsci’s work, which is not so much about methods as about the subject of history. It is about an investigation into what has been driving history forward, an analytical history of social formation and transformation and, for IR, an ‘enquiry into the international dimension of processes’ of these formations.¹²⁹ Second, when Cox refers to social forces as various ideas exercised by states in the international arena, he appears to narrow the notion of social forces. Yet, in the tradition of historical materialism, the notion of social forces has been mostly juxtaposed with discussion of the mode of production, the capitalist one in particular. It relates to the ‘existence or non-existence’ of classes of a social formation.¹³⁰ In other words, social forces are not just created by an inter-ruling class and represented in an inter-state competition. They also derive from the bottom of society and then underlie the struggle between the dominant class and subordinate ones. Third, when Cox uses the notion of hegemony in explaining how a historical structure transforms into another through the

¹²⁸ Thomas, ‘Modernity as “Passive Revolution”’: Gramsci and the Fundamental Concepts of Historical Materialism’, 77–78.

¹²⁹ Robbie Shilliam, ‘Hegemony and the Unfashionable Problematic of “Primitive Accumulation”’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 32, no. 1 (2004): 59–88.

¹³⁰ Poulantzas, *Political Power and Social Classes*, 73.

rearticulation of three constitutive elements, he identifies how, in the inter-state competition, he has not touched upon how such an international transformation could be exercised in the national context and how the state responds to society if there are any repercussions. This omission then leads one to avoid a discussion of hegemony by linking other social agents to the national context in the Coxian brand of Gramsci. But they constitute crucial parts of Gramsci's own understanding of hegemony that appeared in his seminal article on 'the Southern Question',¹³¹ and later in the concept of passive revolution.

These aspects, overlooked by Cox, are, however, crucial to my task to examine Arab nationalism in the international relations of the Middle East and its interplay with state regional policy and the histories of Arab nationalism. Therefore, I move beyond and reformulate the Coxian brand of Gramsci by rectifying its rather systemic and compartmentalised approach. In doing so, I argue that a theoretical reconstruction of Gramsci in IR appears to be necessary via three concepts informed by Gramsci – development, ideology and struggle. These concepts are interrelated in a total theoretical framework in light of Gramsci's 'philosophy of praxis',¹³² or what Roberto Roccu specifically calls 'historical dialectical materialism'. As Roccu argues, this first refers to:

Gramsci's conception of history as both contingency and necessity. The second refers to Gramsci's use of the dialectic as both interaction of opposites within unity and process of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. Lastly, materialism is conceived as the transcendence of metaphysical and sectarian conceptions of both materialism and idealism, towards an integral philosophy...¹³³

Going beyond Gramsci himself, the three interrelated concepts also draw on other recent Gramscian works on reconceptualising and reappraising some insights of Gramsci. These concepts allow a historical sociological investigation of the case of Bahrain by examining: first, Bahraini socio-formation during and after the British

¹³¹ Antonio Gramsci, *Antonio Gramsci: Selections from Political Writings 1921-1926*, trans. Quintin Hoare (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1978), 441–62.

¹³² For an genealogy of the notion of Philosophy of Praxis, see Peter Thomas, 'Gramsci's Marxism: The "Philosophy of Praxis"', in *Antonio Gramsci*, ed. Mark McNally (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 97–117.

¹³³ Roccu, 'Gramsci in Cairo: Neoliberal Authoritarianism, Passive Revolution and Failed Hegemony in Egypt under Mubarak, 1991-2010', 23.

colonial era in which Arab nationalism in Bahrain originated and evolved with the emergence of different social forces; second, the ideological development of Arab nationalism and its connection to both the state and civil society; and third, the struggle among different antagonistic social forces and the ways in which they practise hegemony and counter-hegemony. The following sections then outline these concepts respectively.

2.2 Development: Towards Late-coming Capitalist Formation

The first concept of development lays the cornerstone for embarking on a historical sociological investigation in this thesis. While ‘historical sociology in IR has indeed been waiting for Gramsci’,¹³⁴ to tease out Gramsci’s own understanding of international relations seems to be the first step in a reconstruction of him. As Adam David Morton argues, Gramsci’s contribution to the historical sociology of IR lies in his:

...articulation of capitalism across different scales, with the argument drawing on his specific understanding of the positioning of both ‘national’ relations within the conditioning of ‘the international’ to reveal a theory of hegemony and passive revolution cognisant of the spatial divisions of geopolitics.¹³⁵

But what does ‘the international’ mean and how does it help in the task of reconstructing Gramsci through the illustrative case of Bahrain?

2.2.1 Gramsci on ‘the international’

I argue that Gramsci’s understanding of international relations is best understood through the prism of ‘the international’, which has been brought up in recent HSIR. It has informed a historical sociological rationale to solve the problematic compartmentalisation which, as noted earlier, is a major drawback in Coxian work and other mainstream IR scholarship. This rationale encapsulates both international and domestic social relations and dialectically links ideational and material factors. Yet,

¹³⁴ Morton, ‘Waiting for Gramsci: State Formation, Passive Revolution and the International’, 598.

¹³⁵ Morton, 598.

such a rationale has rarely been appreciated and examined properly, i.e. in depth, in IR, except for its subfield of FPA.¹³⁶ Although Cox implants Gramsci's ideas into IPE, he and others, dubbed neo-Gramscian scholars, somehow overlook the most critical part of Gramsci on international relations, which is underlain by Gramsci's understanding of capitalism. As Gramsci argues,

[C]apitalism is a world historical phenomenon, and its *uneven development* means that individual nations cannot be at the same level of economic development at the same time. In the international sphere, competition, the struggle to acquire private and national property, creates the same hierarchies and system of slavery as in the national sphere; and further, competition is eliminated in favour of monopoly far more efficiently in the international than in the national sphere.¹³⁷

From the above passage, it could be argued that the Coxian brand of Gramsci has its own blind side on development, which derives from the historical and sociological connotations of capitalism. And it is, I maintain, the concept through which the social bases for Gramsci regarding his ideas on international relations have been laid out and via which my reformulation of Gramsci in this thesis starts.

There has been a debate on whether Gramsci's insights into various political aspects of social formation from the Italian historical experience can be applied beyond the national context and furthermore 'internationalised' beyond the Coxian vein.¹³⁸ Following on from this, Morton argues positively for the usefulness of Gramsci's ideas being situated 'in and beyond their context',¹³⁹ and Peter Ives and Nicola Short further echo that:

Gramsci begins analytically from a 'global' position focused on politics and political community in which the historical formation of the modern nation-state

¹³⁶ For example, Juliet Kaarbo's proposal of a turn of domestic politics to IR theories through distinctive FPA insights transcends such compartmentalisation of international and domestic politics. See Juliet Kaarbo, 'A Foreign Policy Analysis Perspective on the Domestic Politics Turn in IR Theory', *International Studies Review* 17, no. 2 (2015): 189–216.

¹³⁷ Antonio Gramsci, *Antonio Gramsci: Selections from Political Writings 1910-1920*, ed. Quintin Hoare, trans. John Mathews (Dehli: Aakar Books, 2014), 69.

¹³⁸ Randall D. Germain and Michael Kenny, 'Engaging Gramsci: International Relations Theory and the New Gramscians', *Review of International Studies* 24, no. 1 (1998): 3–21; Mark Rupert, '(Re-)Engaging Gramsci: A Response to Germain and Kenny', *Review of International Studies* 24, no. 3 (1998): 427–34.

¹³⁹ Adam David Morton, 'Historicizing Gramsci: Situating Ideas in and beyond Their Context', *Review of International Political Economy* 10, no. 1 (2003): 118–46.

is theorised ... [and his insights show] consistent attention to the mutually constitutive relationship between [the national and international context], even when the ‘national’ was his apparent focus of discussion.¹⁴⁰

In this regard, Gramsci can be seen as:

...an avowedly ‘international theorist which does not require his concepts to be ‘scaled-up’ from the ‘national’ to ‘the international’ due to his inherent interest in the intertwining of the relations of force across different territorial and geographic scales of uneven development.¹⁴¹

Moreover, while Gramsci shared in Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky’s ‘attempt to inherit and transform key elements of previous Marxist concepts of revolution’, albeit despite their ‘different strategic consequences’ of ‘passive revolution’ on the one hand and of ‘permanent revolution’ on the other,¹⁴² I argue that his understanding of international relations did indeed share intellectual affinities with Trotsky in seeing ‘the international’ as bearing inter-societal logic. This has resonated recently with HSIR, since the concept of ‘the international’ has been interrogated by some IR historical materialists reformulating Trotsky’s idea of uneven and combined development.¹⁴³ Instead of merely being about interactions among states, IR can be examined through social analysis with an ‘international imagination’ that is ‘to grasp *the rise, the components, the shape* of the specifically modern international system as a definite, historically developing set of relations between people’¹⁴⁴. As such, inter-societal logic denotes that international relations should be examined as interrelations among different social formations, which have brought about ‘an interdependence not just of events but also of the structure of social, material and cultural life’.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰ Peter Ives and Nicola Short, ‘On Gramsci and the International: A Textual Analysis’, *Review of International Studies* 39, no. 3 (2013): 622.

¹⁴¹ Bieler, Bruff, and Morton, ‘Gramsci and “the International”’: Past, Present and Future’, 138.

¹⁴² Peter Thomas, ‘Uneven Developments, Combined: The First World War and Marxist Theories of Revolution’, in *Cataclysm 1914: The First World War and the Making of Modern World Politics*, ed. Alexander Anievas (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014), 282.

¹⁴³ For the recently revival IR historical materialism, drawing from the concept of uneven and combined development, see a seminal article by Justin Rosenberg, ‘Why Is There No International Historical Sociology’, *European Journal of International Relations* 12, no. 3 (2006): 307–40.

¹⁴⁴ Emphasis in original. Justin Rosenberg, ‘The International Imagination: IR Theory and “Classical Social Analysis”’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 23, no. 1 (1994): 98.

¹⁴⁵ Rosenberg, ‘Why Is There No International Historical Sociology’, 324.

In applying such logic to the question of ideas in IR, inter-societal logic helps to explain how modern ideologies derive from a historical juncture when capitalist social relations expanded into and then combined with a pre-capitalist, or backward, society through an advanced capitalist state. Since every society has gone through a different historical process, the characteristic of unevenness can be noted among different societies by considering their own social formation. In the capitalist epoch, the notion of unevenness thus moves beyond its primitive geographical and ecological variation by acquiring ‘a sharpness owing to the universalizing logics of capital expressed through competitive pressures, leading to an inter-societal process of comparison’.¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, it sets a historical prerequisite for the coming combination of different forms of social formation.

2.2.2 ‘Historically concrete combination’ in development

What does such combination mean? Justin Rosenberg sees it in an abstract way, as an interdependent structure of social, material and cultural life, so the notion of combination might vary in terms of how such a mechanism is defined by what has been ‘combined’ concretely in historical analyses. For this, Jessica Evans suggests looking for those mechanisms of combination that:

...condition the integration of so-called backward social formations into global capitalist market relations and...directly affect the transformation of social class relations and property relations and, hence, the logics and conditions within which reproduction and accumulation are practi[s]ed.¹⁴⁷

As a consequence of such mechanisms being practised, a combined social formation revealed in late-coming capitalist societies does not usually copy stories from advanced capitalist ones, nor promise a linear trajectory of progression. Rather, the process of social formation invariably takes multilinear trajectories under international pressure and usually sees exploitation and contestation as a form of colonialism or imperialism in these societies. At this point, inter-societal logic becomes concrete in various forms of the accumulation, flow and competition of capital in and between societies, which generates various social forces and classes defined by their position

¹⁴⁶ Jessica Evans, ‘The Uneven and Combined Development of Class Forces: Migration as Combined Development’, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 29, no. 3 (2016): 1063.

¹⁴⁷ Evans, 1064.

in the capitalist mode of production. For Gramsci, this way of seeing international relations through inter-societal logic in the concept of ‘the international’ underlines his understanding of ideas in international relations and has appeared in some historical sociological works.¹⁴⁸ Although Gramsci never analysed international relations systematically, he nonetheless asserted that international relations do precede such logic, given the nature of capitalism and the inter-societal ontology of international relations.¹⁴⁹ This logic allows us to explain the social conditions and contexts from which the meaning of ideologies is substantiated, along with different social forces in the political struggle between the people and the ruling authorities. This has been the foremost characteristic of the concept of development adopted in this thesis.

It must be reiterated that while Gramsci is well-known for his insightful investigation of the ideological linkage between ‘civil society’ and ‘political society’ on a national scale, as will be discussed later, he did not prioritise ‘the domestic’ social logic over ‘the international’, as Cox seems to suggest. Instead, he recognised the extent to which international pressure could cause domestic political ripples. As he argues:

[T]he more the immediate economic life of a nation is subordinated to international relations, the more a particular party will come to represent this situation and to exploit it, with the aim of preventing rival parties gaining [the] upper hand.¹⁵⁰

Of this encounter between ‘the international’ and ‘the national’ in the epoch of capitalism, the dominant class attempts to seek general interests among subordinate ones. The state plays a role in coordinating any conflicts of interest among these groups along with the process of state formation. It is a continuous process in which, as Gramsci further argues,

...international relations intertwine with these internal relations of nation-states, creating new, unique and *historically concrete combinations*. *A particular*

¹⁴⁸ Morton, ‘Waiting for Gramsci: State Formation, Passive Revolution and the International’; Jamie Allinson and Alexander Anievas, ‘The Uneven and Combined Development of Meiji Restoration: A Passive Revolutionary Road to Capitalist Modernity’, *Capital and Class* 34, no. 3 (2010): 469–90.

¹⁴⁹ Allinson and Anievas, ‘The Uneven and Combined Development of Meiji Restoration: A Passive Revolutionary Road to Capitalist Modernity’, 473.

¹⁵⁰ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), 176.

ideology, for instance, born in a highly developed country, is disseminated in less developed countries, impinging on the local interplay of combinations. This relation between international forces and national forces is further complicated by the existence within every State of several structurally diverse territorial sectors, with diverse relations of forces at all levels.¹⁵¹

For the case of Bahrain, Gramsci on ‘the international’ helps to explain Bahraini social formation from which Arab nationalism and its related social forces emerged, and his reference to a ‘historically concreted combination’ is defined as a mechanism for combined different modes of production, which gave rise to capitalist modernity realised in Bahrain through British colonialism. The expansion of capitalism through British propulsive modernisation in Bahrain and the realisation of oil commodification since the 1920s and ’30s resulted in a combination of Bahraini society and global capitalism under British colonialism. This combination fed a context for the emergence of newly-defined class relations and different contradictory social forces, which will be further elaborated in chapter 3 through Tom Nairn’s perspective of development and nationalism in peripheral areas. It then led to Arab nationalism whose political connotations were represented through intellectual and popular movements. Since the 1920s, while these movements have been continuously questioning a series of contested socio-political issues in society, Arab nationalism in Bahrain has been evolving over time. In response to Bahraini capitalist social formation, the demands of Bahraini intellectual and popular movements were increasingly corresponding to the political agendas of regional and international anti-imperialist movements.

2.2.3 The Crisis and historical restoration: passive revolution

The concept of development is also useful in that it helps to make sense of the moment of crisis in which Bahraini social formation arrived at another historical conjuncture: Bahrain’s formal independence and decolonisation. While this thesis aims to revisit the interplay of Arab nationalism and state regional policy by highlighting other histories of Arab nationalism, the struggle between the people and the Al Khalifa regime as result of development comes into focus. In the case of Bahrain, the two regional revolutions – Marxist-Leninist and Iranian – in the 1970s had never

¹⁵¹ Emphasis added, Gramsci, 182.

looked like turning Bahrain into more revolutionary soil, like its counterparts of Oman, South Yemen and Iran. But it did bring ‘the crisis’ to Al Khalifa as the ruling class. As such, before I further explain how Bahrain’s policy toward Gulf alignment was shaped along with the evolution of Arab nationalism, a discussion of Gramsci on the concept of crisis and passive revolution is instructive to the concept of development.

For Gramsci, the concept of crisis refers to the moment when the hegemonic status of the ruling class was unstable and no longer reached consensus with other subordinate classes but exercised coercive force.¹⁵² The crisis

...occurs either because the ruling [class] has failed in some major political undertaking for which it has requested, or forcibly extracted, the consent of the broad masses (war, for example), or because huge masses (especially of peasants and petit-bourgeois intellectuals) have passed suddenly from a state of political passivity to a certain activity, and put forward demands which taken together, albeit not organically formulated, add up to a revolution.¹⁵³

To manage a crisis and prevent it turning into revolution, the ruling class appropriates ‘passive revolution’ to reconstitute a historical bloc and displace the momentum of revolution.¹⁵⁴ In passive revolution, Gramsci has never given a strict definition of it, only elaborated its connotations from the experience of the Italian *Risorgimento*, the Italian unification movement from 1815 to 1871. It is ‘revolution’ without a ‘revolution’¹⁵⁵ and,

...the fact [is] that what was involved was not a social group which ‘led’ other groups, but a State which, even though it had limitations as a power, ‘led’ the group which should have been ‘leading’ and was able to put at the latter’s disposal an army and a politico-diplomatic strength.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² Gramsci, 275–76.

¹⁵³ Gramsci, 210.

¹⁵⁴ For passive revolution, Gramsci also juxtaposes a metaphorical concept of Caesarism with it. As Gramsci defines, Caesarism is ‘...a situation in which the forces in conflict balance each other in a catastrophic manner; that is to say, they balance each other in such a way that a continuation of the conflict can only terminate in their reciprocal destruction. When the progressive force A struggles with the reactionary force B, not only may A defeat B or B defeat A, but it may happen that neither A nor B defeats the other— that they bleed each other mutually and then a third force C intervenes from outside, subjugating what is left of both A and B’. Gramsci, 219.

¹⁵⁵ Gramsci, 59.

¹⁵⁶ Gramsci, 105.

As such, its representation can be much grappled with, along with some dynamics one finds from historical processes, like ‘top-down transformation or ‘revolution from above’, gradual modifications to the existing historical bloc, the extension of the state, a technical solution to hegemony, displacement of subaltern agency, the duration of capitalism, *uneven and combined development...*, reformism...’.¹⁵⁷ However one conceptualises passive revolution, the most widely accepted notion can be summarised as: a critical historical process alongside which newly formative social forces emerge and intervene in the existing political struggle between progressive or reactionary forces and, if successful, fulfil a historical restoration along with a social transformation as a result.

To resonate with Gramsci on ‘the international’ characterised by uneven and combined development, such a historical restoration, notes Gramsci, was distinctive between ‘the West’ and ‘the East’, as they might react to a crisis differently. In more advanced states like those in the West, state-society relations maintain a more balanced complex in which civil society has evolved into a sturdy stage, and might be resistant to fundamental changes to this equilibrium and thus avoid disastrous revolutions. On the ideological level, a system of ideas within this complex is protected by trench-systems of modern warfare, a metaphor Gramsci uses. It would not be fully destroyed over time or at speed, only challenged by the that adopt a strategy of a ‘war of position’.¹⁵⁸

For Gramsci, the distinction between East and West emerges from the different historical development since the late 19th century. When the Jacobin experience reinforced the role of ‘civil society’ and the concept of ‘permanent revolution’ after 1789, the experience of the colonial expansion of Europe nonetheless set the stage for internal and international changes to the State; it then prepared the State, or political society, to carve out its relations with civil society and establish its hegemony through a more complex and massive structure of modern democracies from the late 19th century onwards. It redirected the opposition strategy from a ‘war of movement’ to a ‘war of position’, and the concept of ‘permanent revolution’ was to a large extent

¹⁵⁷ Emphasis added, De Smet, *Gramsci on Tahrir: Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Egypt*, 65.

¹⁵⁸ Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 235.

stifled on European soil. But, historical experiences as such were only applied to Europe instead of backward countries and the colonies.¹⁵⁹ In more backward states, such as in the East, political society plays a dominant role in the state-society complex and overwhelms civil society, and the system of ideas is subject to fundamental changes. Once the State was shaken by crisis and even taken by revolutionaries who waged a war of movement and a 'frontal attack' on political society, a reconstituted state-society complex might be followed by certain changes to a historical bloc: changes to the unity of superstructure and structure along with the success of revolution, i.e. a re-articulation of political and social instances of certain social formations.

In the case of Bahrain, crisis came to Al Khalifa with the outbreak of the Marxist-Leninist revolution in Arabia and the Islamic revolution in Iran. In these revolutionary moments, one can see how counter-hegemonic intellectuals questioned and challenged some fundamental issues about Al Khalifa and the contested subject of sovereignty. More broadly, these issues were also related to intellectual reflections on existing social relations on the national, regional and international levels. Meanwhile, one can also see how Al Khalifa tried to align alternative social forces against counter-hegemonic ones by continuously exercising its ruling will over the historical bloc on which it relies over time. However, the most remarkable part of the Bahraini case is that while counter-hegemonic forces did not overthrow the regime, a historical restoration of passive revolution was not achieved either, leaving a dilemma for Al Khalifa in forming policy towards regional alignment with the US in the 1970s.

The concept of passive revolution is empirically supported by the case of Bahraini sociopolitical reforms between 1971 and 1975, with a focus on the parliamentary experiment in 1973. The evolution of the parliamentary experiment shows that 'the international', as conceived in Gramsci and noted earlier, resonates with Trotsky's ideas of uneven and combined development of capitalist social formation having an impact on Arab nationalism and its dialectical relations with Bahrain's regional

¹⁵⁹ Gramsci, 242–43.

policy.¹⁶⁰ While the features of capitalist development seem to substantiate Gramsci's concept of 'passive revolution' as a 'molecular process through which class demands from below are absorbed from above' under the international pressure of other societies¹⁶¹, a successful case did not, however, show itself in Bahrain.

An incomplete passive revolution, as will be shown in chapter 5, was represented in the dissolution of the parliamentary experiment in 1975 and Al Khalifa's rejection of reviving the idea of popular political participation. I argue that this failure was because of two major reasons that relate to the broader impact of international capitalist social formation conceived in the concept of development. On the one hand, the intellectual and popular movements around Arab nationalism at the point of Bahrain's formal independence in 1971 had shifted revolutionarily from their predecessor to more leftward leaning Arab nationalists, the New Arab Left movements. This revolutionary intellectual shift was a result of the compound effects of geopolitical competition and capitalist formation in the Middle East, be it the *Naksa* of the 1967 war or evolution of the oil-producing mode in the Gulf. As a counter-hegemonic force, the New Arab Left was calling for, or interpellating, a new historical bloc vis-à-vis the established one Al Khalifa inherited from the British protectorate era. After the British withdrawal, Al Khalifa attempted to connect itself ideologically with civil society through organic intellectuals of the old cadres of the Arab nationalist movement (ANM). Yet their leadership in popular movements at this point had been displaced by counter-revolutionary intellectual ones of the New Arab Left. This meant Al Khalifa had difficulty in achieving a successful passive revolution and failed to incorporate different social forces. As a consequence, the struggle between civil society and the regime was not resolved and carried on with the issue of sovereignty conflated with the US military presence in Bahrain in the 1970s. On the other hand, this struggle within Bahrain raised the suspicions of neighbouring states, like Saudi Arabia, whose economic support to Bahrain was critical to the material resources on

¹⁶⁰ Halliday also argues that Gramsci's case studies on the unfulfilled bourgeois revolution in Italy gave a powerful example, which shows the impact of uneven and combined development on the Italian state formation. See Fred Halliday, *Revolution and World Politics: The Rise and Fall of the Sixth Great Power* (New York: Palgrave, 1999), 245–46.

¹⁶¹ Allinson and Anievas, 'The Uneven and Combined Development of Meiji Restoration: A Passive Revolutionary Road to Capitalist Modernity'.

which Al Khalifa counted. Under Saudi pressure the parliamentary experiment was terminated and never revived in the period covered by this thesis. Al Khalifa's initial objective of launching a passive revolution as 'the conceptual antipode of permanent revolution' failed.¹⁶²

In sum, the concept of development informed by other scholars' reformulations of Gramsci's ideas beyond the Coxian brand helps to explain two historical processes in Bahrain in the twentieth century. First, it explains the emergence of social forces around the origins of Arab nationalism, along with Bahraini social formation under British colonialism. Moreover, second, it explains the historical conjuncture of Bahraini formal independence. At this conjuncture, Al Khalifa sought a passive revolution to resolve the struggle in Bahrain and then attempted to restore its ruling status. While this concept offers a Gramscian lens through which to outline the social bases for Arab nationalism, the present chapter has not as yet conceptualised terms related to the concept of development, like ideologies, historical bloc, hegemony, counter-hegemony and intellectuals. In the following sections, I will elucidate these concepts and their application to the case of Bahrain.

2.3 Ideology: Some Political Aspects of Social Formation

As this thesis will constantly stress, ideas are supposed to be seen as a set of ideologies through which people interpret politics and give both normative and positivist answers to the established order, be it domestic or international.¹⁶³ The notion of these ideologies does not stem from 'timeless and continuous culture' but is driven by sociopolitical dynamics as 'creatures of historical and sociological forces'.¹⁶⁴ Therefore, the representation of ideas, or ideologies, in international relations has its own universality across cultural differences and is best understood through examining both the structure and practices to which it is related. As such, ideas in international relations in the Middle East are not exclusively understood as religious

¹⁶² De Smet, *Gramsci on Tahrir: Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Egypt*, 6.

¹⁶³ Halliday, *The Middle East in International Relations: Power, Politics and Ideology*, 195–96.

¹⁶⁴ Halliday, 198.

and ethnic components, but correspond to broader sociopolitical dynamics along with capitalist social formation. This is the task of conceptualising ideologies beyond culture and state boundaries, which the chapter now undertakes through the integration of historical sociology and my own interpretation of Gramsci.

2.3.1 *Ideas as ideologies: willed vs organic*

For those who have ever attempted to shed light on the international dimension of ideas and give an alternative explanation of how ideas work in international relations through a historical materialist lens, it seems that this task has been achieved neither completely nor theoretically. Fred Halliday argues that ‘ideas ... must rather be seen in relation to the totality and to this material determination within it, defined by the forces and relations of production’.¹⁶⁵ But, while he recognizes that ideas as ideologies ‘are not necessarily simply modular or mimetic but are reflections of the different [and uneven] geo-temporal effects of capitalism’, he nonetheless does not detail the context theoretically and empirically in IR, let alone further unpack how the domestic political dynamic corresponds to it.¹⁶⁶ The statement that ideas should be considered as historical and sociological products still needs further investigation in order to evaluate the rationale of historical materialism in IR.

Gramsci’s theorisation of ideology offers a supplement, it ‘signifies not [a] falsity as opposed to a truth, but the way in which social groups make sense of their world and construct themselves *as* social groups’.¹⁶⁷ Therefore, ‘ideologies are such only when historically effective and operative in the organisation of a society that extends beyond merely individual ideas’.¹⁶⁸ For Gramsci, ideology has its own aspect of ‘sensationalism’ that is associated with religious faith and can be investigated through scientific analyses of ideas. But, when it passes to a specific ‘system of ideas’, the notion of ideology needs to be understood in a historical sense as a *superstructure*, which constitutes a unity with a structure conceptualised by Gramsci as a historical

¹⁶⁵ Halliday, *Rethinking International Relations*, 60.

¹⁶⁶ Toby Dodge, ‘Fred Halliday: High Modernism and a Social Science of the Middle East’, *International Affairs* 87, no. No.5 (2011): 1149.

¹⁶⁷ Thomas, ‘Modernity as “Passive Revolution”’: Gramsci and the Fundamental Concepts of Historical Materialism’, 67–68.

¹⁶⁸ Thomas, 68.

bloc, a historical materialist theorisation of the state, which will be covered in detail in a later section. Seeing ideology in this way, I would nonetheless like to highlight the concept of ideology per se by noting the nuance of ideology elaborated by Gramsci. This nuance informs a crucial analytical avenue for this thesis by examining the evolution of Arab nationalism and its interplay with the ideological ties between state and society, i.e. willed ideology and organic ideology. As Gramsci reminds us:

One must ... distinguish between historically organic ideologies, those, that is, which are necessary to a given structure, and ideologies that are arbitrary, rationalistic, or 'willed'. To the extent that ideologies are historically necessary they have a validity which is 'psychological'; they 'organise' human masses, and create the terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle, etc. To the extent that they are arbitrary they only create individual 'movements', polemics and so on.¹⁶⁹

Such a Gramscian lens of willed and organic ideology has also been applied to the Middle East. It explains how some Middle East regimes, like Egypt, Syria and Iran, exercise Ba'athism and Islamism as willed ideologies, and how they establish an 'ideological hegemony' to which the organic ideologies of popular movements and willed ideologies are linked and thereby buttress state foreign policy towards alignments.¹⁷⁰

In the case of Bahrain, the historical conditions and processes generated by uneven and combined development have, however, made such congruency difficult and instead lead to more contradictory sociopolitical bases for a linkage between the willed ideology of Al Khalifa and the organic ideology of Bahraini civil society. This ideological disconnection was conditioned by the Bahraini capitalist social formation conceived in the concept of development. As will be shown in chapter 3, it took root ever since the moment when Bahrain kicked off the process of its encounter with the global capitalist market via oil commodification under British colonial tutelage. Since then, this process has been feeding the content of Bahrain's contested capitalist modernity via which state-society relations have been conceived through a British

¹⁶⁹ Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 367–77.

¹⁷⁰ Ewan Stein, 'Ideological Codependency and Regional Order: Iran, Syria, and the Axis of Refusal' 50, Issue. 3 (2017): 676.

‘colonial ethnosectarian gaze’, as Omar AlShehabi terms it, since then.¹⁷¹ Moreover, the view through such a colonial lens, as I will argue later in the thesis, supported by historical evidence, of a demarcating society along ethnosectarian lines then feeds Al Khalifa regime’s willed ideology and its rule.

Beyond such a form of willed ideology, the development from the late 1930s to the 1960s also gave momentum to the evolution of an organic ideology in Bahraini civil society. A series of labour and popular movements exposed the contradictions between the regime and society. It then facilitated bringing ‘foreign political subjects’, informed by various ideological trends of anti-imperialism, into those movements and reflected upon the sociopolitical linkage of Bahrain to its external surroundings. The trajectory of labour movements was evolving from the demands for better working conditions to challenges to the British colonialism behind the Al Khalifa regime, and from latent political reform agendas to more conspicuous revolutionary goals propounded by pan-Arab nationalist and socialist ideas in the 1950s and ’60s. The conflictual sociopolitical bases, as result of ‘the international dimension of social transformation’,¹⁷² then polarised the different social forces within Bahrain, especially between the New Arab Left intellectuals and Al Khalifa and its allies. By the time Bahrain attained its formal independence during the crisis of regional revolutions, Arab nationalism was not yet seen as a congruency between willed and organic ideologies.

2.3.2 National-popular collective will

If ideology is categorised into willed and organic ones, as suggested by Gramsci, what do they mean to Arab nationalism? And how do we conceptualise Arab nationalism through Gramsci in the case of Bahrain, although he seemed to rarely address directly the issue of nationalism? For this, I argue that Arab nationalism could be conceptualised within the concept of ‘national-popular collective will’ proposed by Gramsci.

¹⁷¹ AlShehabi, Omar Hesham, ‘Contested Modernity: Divided Rule and the Birth of Sectarianism, Nationalism, and Absolutism in Bahrain’, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 2016

¹⁷² Shilliam, ‘Hegemony and the Unfashionable Problematic of “Primitive Accumulation”’.

Resonating with the preceding discussion on willed ideology, a collective will is a political will, which is usually referred to ‘as [the ruling class’s] operative awareness of historical necessity, as [its] protagonist of a real and effective historical drama’.¹⁷³ It is ‘a creation of concrete phantasy which acts on dispersed and shattered people’ by organising an alternative collective will,¹⁷⁴ which ‘is to be sought in the existence of certain specific social groups’ within civil society as the national-popular collective will.¹⁷⁵ For Gramsci, the formation of a national-popular collective will usually depends on the awakening of a Jacobin force, a revolutionary bourgeois force, and it is the foundation of modern states.¹⁷⁶ Historically, such a force derives from urban social groups whose emergence is due to ‘an adequate development in the field of industrial production’ and who have obtained ‘a certain level of historical-political culture’.¹⁷⁷ However, their emergence does not necessarily lead to the formation of a national-popular will unless ‘the great mass of peasant farmers bursts *simultaneously* into political life’.¹⁷⁸ Such an alliance between the urban bourgeoisie and rural peasants is crucial, as Gramsci also highlights in ‘the Southern Question’ on the necessity of a class alliance between Northern workers and Southern peasants,¹⁷⁹ in order to organise a national-popular collective will and then unify counter-hegemonic forces to oust an existing hegemonic ruling class.

Following the above rationale, Gramsci further notes that the concepts of ‘national’ and ‘popular’ and their connotations for sovereignty might vary across contexts due to the varying extent of ideological linkage between intellectuals and the people.¹⁸⁰ This variation, I argue, leads to contestation of the subject of sovereignty as shown in the Bahraini case in this thesis. As such, I further argue that Arab nationalism is best understood as a ‘national-popular collective will’ rather than the shared identity and structural norms mainly suggested by IR constructivists. Moreover, its connotations for sovereignty go beyond the IR constructivist binary perspective of

¹⁷³ Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 130.

¹⁷⁴ Gramsci, 126.

¹⁷⁵ Gramsci, 131.

¹⁷⁶ Gramsci, 131.

¹⁷⁷ Gramsci, 132.

¹⁷⁸ Emphasis in origin. Gramsci, 132.

¹⁷⁹ Gramsci, *Antonio Gramsci: Selections from Political Writings 1921-1926*, 442.

¹⁸⁰ Ives and Short, ‘On Gramsci and the International: A Textual Analysis’, 637.

Arab nationalism and sovereignty and are examined through a process in which different social forces struggle with each other. The process, as will be shown in chapter 4, speaks to the rise of the New Arab Left as a counter-hegemonic force of Arab nationalism. Also, it speaks in chapter 5 to Al Khalifa's tactics to prevent such a 'national-popular collective will' from being organised within Bahraini civil society, as well as to preserve 'the consciousness of the subordinate masses at the level of corporate consciousness'¹⁸¹ through an attempted passive revolution in support of the regime's hegemony.

2.4 Struggle: Hegemony and Counter-hegemony

In the preceding sections, I have sought to outline two concepts – development and ideology – informed by Gramsci in support of my reformulation of Gramsci as a historical sociological framework for ideas in IR. While considering, nonetheless, the significance of social bases to understandings of ideologies, I do not intend to argue that their evolution and influence on state foreign policy are determined by development. Instead, I will argue that the relationship of ideologies and foreign policy, more specifically that of Arab nationalism and state policy towards regional alignment, is mediated by a political struggle between different social forces. Then, the struggle affects whether a stable historical bloc and hegemony can be established by the ruling class in support of its policy. For this, this chapter draws on Peter Thomas' interpretation of Gramsci and turns to elaborate the last concept of my reformulation of Gramsci: struggle.

2.4.1 Historical bloc and hegemony

If historical materialism has been criticised for not having a theory of state for a long time, Gramsci's elaboration of 'historical bloc' and 'hegemony' did try to defend such critiques and carve out a terrain for a historical materialist discussion of state, which is an alternative one to a Weberian account, within the traditions of historical

¹⁸¹ Hyug Baeg Im, 'Hegemony and Counter-Hegemony in Gramsci', *Asian Perspective* 15, no. 1 (1991): 148.

sociology. For Gramsci, a historical bloc refers to a unity of structure and superstructure in which,

...precisely material forces are the content and ideologies are the form, though this distinction between form and content has purely dialectic value, since the material forces would be inconceivable historically without form and the ideologies would be individual fancies without the material forces.¹⁸²

While the historical and sociological sense of ideas is explicated by Gramsci's dialectical relationship of structure-superstructure, the dialectics gives a theoretical foundation to my understanding of the state of Bahrain in this thesis. In such a dialectics, ideas are not anchored in a timeless cultural context so that, for example, they give birth to a unitary and uncontested notion of Arab nationalism. Rather, Arab nationalism has been seen as representing *realpolitik* as ideology, which sometimes reflects, or envisages, a form of the actual material content. As such, a stable historical bloc does not rely on a mysterious and unfathomable culture shared among the ruling class and subordinated ones. Instead, it mirrors and relates to social relations in which one usually finds a political leadership, which enables the creation of a dialectical unity of political and social instances through a particular formation and helms historical processes through different social forces.

As such, for Gramsci, political leadership represents a hegemony. It does not only refer to a material dominance through the coercive means of economic and military power. It denotes a particular kind of political power exercised in a dynamic process through which the ruling class attempts to acquire consent from the subordinate classes; and if successful, the former derives ideological resources from the latter to exercise its will. Such a process is also one of the state being ideologically linked to civil society through the connection between willed ideology and organic ideology, as noted earlier. Therefore, hegemony is not a 'fixed definition or close system' but best understood as a process highlighted by certain 'moments'.¹⁸³ As Peter Thomas adds,

...first, hegemony as social and political leadership; second, hegemony as a political project; third, the realization of this hegemonic project in the concrete

¹⁸² Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 377.

¹⁸³ Thomas, 'Hegemony, Passive Revolution and the Modern Prince', 24.

institution and organisational forms of a ‘hegemonic apparatus’; and fourth, ultimately and decisively, the social and political hegemony of the workers’ movement. These four moments constitute a ‘dialectical chain’ along which Gramsci deepens his researches throughout the *Prison Notebooks*; beginning from the ‘primordial fact’ of hegemony as leadership, an immanent and expansive dynamic leads him to uncover the determinations of hegemonic political practice as the foundation for a new type of politics that could move beyond the forms of domination of political modernity.¹⁸⁴

As discussion of hegemony is usually juxtaposed with that of passive revolution, Thomas’ elaboration on hegemony is instructive to the case of Bahrain in two ways. On the one hand, the first three defined moments of hegemony offer a non-Coxian brand of Gramscian lens to examine the process of Bahraini state formation after its formal independence until at least 1975. In this process, as will be shown in chapter 5, building a hegemony within Bahrain appeared to the Al Khalifa regime to be the first step for the state of Bahrain in the independence phase. As such, a series of top-down sociopolitical reforms was initiated by Al Khalifa. In doing so, Al Khalifa sought an ideological connection to Bahraini civil society, which was crucial for its strategic plan to align with the US after the British withdrawal. On the other hand, the fourth defined moment speaks to the rise of the New Arab Left as a political leadership of counter-hegemonic forces around Arab nationalism. It conceptualises the ways in which New Arab Left intellectuals mobilised their support in both the street and the Parliament, and thereby organised ideologically a national-popular collective will in light of their version of the Arab nationalist manifesto informed by socialism, anti-imperialism and even Third Worldism to some extent.

Following Thomas’ elaboration of different moments of hegemony, it must nonetheless be stressed that such a process does not register as a linear trajectory of state formation. In other words, the completion of a preceding moment does not necessarily lead to the next one. Therefore, as John Chalcraft and Yaseen Noorani argue:

[H]egemony is ... a process, an open-ended form of construction, not a once-and-for-all achievement. Hegemonic forms are contingently strong. They are partial,

¹⁸⁴ Thomas, 24–25.

relatively thick or thin and include latent *contradictions and fractures*, as well as meanings and resources that are not fully controllable.¹⁸⁵

Those contradictions and fractures come from forces that run counter to an existing hegemony, and they can be conceptualised as counter-hegemony, which is ‘a gradual process of criticism ... involving reform, disarticulation and rearticulation of ideological elements in such a way as to create a new collective will – a political, moral and intellectual unity’¹⁸⁶ – organised by an alternative leadership.

In the case of Bahrain, counter-forces refer specifically to one of the currents of Arab nationalist movements post-1967, and their discussion highlights my consideration to bring other histories of Arab nationalism into IRME, as argued in the introductory chapter. They were led by the so-called New Arab Left movement. As will be shown in chapter 4, its manifesto was informed by a revolutionary turn in the 1960s and later Marxist-Leninist revolutions in Arabia in the late 1960s. Moreover, Bahraini intellectuals in relation to such a movement then attempted to organise a national-popular collective will around Arab nationalism against Al Khalifa’s monarchical rule after Bahrain’s formal independence in 1971. The evolution of this movement corresponded not only to regional and international anti-imperialist movements but also to political struggle in the national sphere along with the process of Bahraini state formation throughout the 1970s. Resonating with this process of passive revolution and its open-ended form, the case of Bahrain offers historical evidence for how such a passive revolution was interrupted in 1975.

2.4.2 *Organic and counter-hegemonic intellectuals*

Following Gramsci’s elaboration of a historical bloc and Thomas’ complementary interpretation of hegemony, it could be argued that the ideological connection between the ruling class and subordinated ones appears to be critical. In this regard, it is important to see how such a connection is established. For this, Gramsci on intellectuals is instructive and constitutes the last brick for my

¹⁸⁵ Emphasis added. John Chalcraft and Yaseen Noorani, ‘Introduction’, in *Counterhegemony in the Colony and Postcolony*, ed. John Chalcraft and Yaseen Noorani (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 16.

¹⁸⁶ Chalcraft and Noorani, 4.

reformulation of Gramsci as a historical sociological framework in this thesis. Furthermore, it helps to understand ideology via a more agent-oriented focus, which fills the gap left by IR constructivist and eclecticist approaches to the ideas reviewed in the previous chapter.

While anatomising ideology, Gramsci also makes theoretical sense of intellectuals as critical agents ideologically linking a ruling class and subordinate ones. Following his understanding of development, what constitutes the crucial context for Gramsci's discussion of intellectuals comes first with his distinction of state-society relations between Russia and Western Europe, 'the East' and 'the West'. As Gramsci notes:

In Russia the State was everything, civil society was primordial and gelatinous; in the West, there was a proper relation between State and civil society, and when the State trembled a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed. The State was only an outer ditch, behind which there stood a powerful system of fortresses and earthworks: more or less numerous from one State to the next, it goes without saying – but this precisely necessitated an accurate reconnaissance of each individual country.¹⁸⁷

His observation shows the different nature of state-society relations for which the unevenness between 'the West' and 'the East' sets historical and sociological conditions. For Gramsci, such a distinction between so-called 'advanced' and 'backward' characteristics was also represented in the unevenness between urban and rural areas, a non-fully-fledged capitalist society or a pre-capitalist society at least, from which intellectuals arise.

There are two different types of intellectuals identified by Gramsci, shaped by historical processes. On the one hand, there are 'organic intellectuals' who come into existence as organisers including different social strata organically creating sociopolitical conditions beyond the realm of economic production in favour of their own class.¹⁸⁸ They rise from certain 'specialisations of partial aspects of the primitive activity of the new social type' that come to prominence in the existing sociopolitical

¹⁸⁷ Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 238.

¹⁸⁸ Gramsci, 5.

establishment, and thus become another social group driving historical processes.¹⁸⁹ On the other hand, there are ‘traditional intellectuals’ who have existed throughout history and are particularly represented in the type of ecclesiastics that were the main ideological (political) source ‘bound to the landed aristocracy’, sharing ‘the exercise of feudal ownership of land and the use of state privileges connected with society’.¹⁹⁰

The sociological and historical functions of intellectuals lie in their connections with all social classes, including the ruling and subordinate ones. For any class, the development of connections is dynamic in the form of a struggle that must ‘assimilate and conquer ideologically the traditional intellectuals’ while they are becoming the dominant group and developing their organic intellectuals.¹⁹¹ And this is also a historical process through which intellectuals reconceptualise their relationship with ‘the world of production’ by mediating ‘the whole fabric of society’ and ‘the complex of superstructures’. By superstructure, Gramsci then further identifies two major superstructural levels as ‘civil society’ on the one hand, and ‘political society’ on the other. They are critical concepts, conceived by Gramsci, that help to elucidate how a historical bloc becomes a stable superstructure through which the ruling class exercises hegemony in society and commands politics via the State, and in which intellectuals play its deputies to exercise power in the social and political realm.¹⁹² This subaltern function exercised by intellectuals, according to Gramsci, then generates the division of labourers who can be differentiated by their positions; and thus, by the way, they practise as articulators in society and some areas with different degrees of development of the capitalist system. Alongside the developments in capitalist social relations, as Gramsci further shows, ‘intellectuals of the urban type’ are more like subaltern officers in an army who are rather apolitical and purpose-orientation articulators situated between entrepreneurs and the instrumental masses.¹⁹³ But ‘intellectuals of the rural type’, mainly in the form of dominance by traditional intellectuals, exercise their social and political functions of articulating the peasant masses to the petite bourgeoisie, such as priests, lawyers and doctors, in relations with the state administration. And social

¹⁸⁹ Gramsci, 6.

¹⁹⁰ Gramsci, 7.

¹⁹¹ Gramsci, 10.

¹⁹² Gramsci, 12.

¹⁹³ Gramsci, 14.

relations as such not only posit the rural intellectual at the top of the social ladder which the peasant might be aiming to climb, but also make the peasant subordinate to the intellectual.¹⁹⁴ More importantly, ‘every organic development of the peasant masses, up to a certain point, is linked to and depends on movements among the intellectuals’.¹⁹⁵

The distinction between urban and rural intellectuals investigated by Gramsci here is understood by the extent to which the capitalist system has developed in relations to politics. In urban areas, the reason why intellectuals are organic might be seen as a representation of capitalist modernity and attributed to the intrinsic nature of the expansion of capitalism. This expansionary nature then pushes the needs of the intellectuals to increasingly and organically include different social strata as the base of a historical bloc, and it attempts to forge an ideological system in connection between civil and political society. This ideological system, with organic intellectuals playing articulators between two superstructural levels, not only circulates ideas that justify the capitalist mode of production in the economic realm but also legitimises the State in a modern form that thrives along with capitalist markets.

This is the case in the rise of Arab nationalism among the middle classes who inherited liberalist traditions from *Nahda* (renaissance) in Egypt, since the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and evolved throughout the era of ‘Arab awakening’,¹⁹⁶ and later the heyday of Pan Arab nationalism in the 1950s and ’60s. However, such an ideological linkage of organic intellectuals to civil society was not stable. Once the impact of capitalist social formation on civil society feeds back to an established historical bloc, organic intellectuals might not be able to play their role of maintaining ideological connections between civil and political society. Moreover, their role of representing civil society is usually challenged by another group of intellectuals, alongside the rise of new social forces. These intellectuals are ‘counter-hegemonic’ ones who attempt to rearticulate the ties of material (social) and ideological (political) instances underlying an existing establishment. In doing so, to

¹⁹⁴ Gramsci, 14.

¹⁹⁵ Gramsci, 15.

¹⁹⁶ George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1938).

redefine their ideological connection with the people is imperative when they forge an alternative political leadership within civil society.

For the case of Bahrain, my focus on intellectuals lies particularly in the distinction between organic and counter-hegemonic intellectuals. I refer to organic intellectuals as conventional Arab nationalists ideologically affiliated to Ba'athism or Nasserism, and some Shia intellectuals in Bahrain. In the 1970s, they were crucial to ideological linkages of Al Khalifa seeking to intervene in 'civil society' and thus resist 'exotic ideas', be they Marxist-Leninist ideas or Khomeinism in crisis. However, echoing George Habash's revolutionary call for the liberation of Palestine and revolutions in Arabia, a new generation of Bahraini Arab nationalists, the New Arab Left, emerged in the late 1960s. It is another category, noted as counter-hegemonic intellectuals of significance to my discussion of Arab nationalism and Bahrain's regional policy in the 1970s. Having close ideological ties to Marxism-Leninism, the New Arab Left emerged from its harsh critiques of conventional Arab Nationalist movements. When challenging the sociopolitical structure on which a conventional historical bloc was built, the New Arab Left also rejected established social relations, seen as the British colonial legacy that Al Khalifa managed to sustain. These forces catalysed radicalisation in the Bahraini Arab Nationalist movement through the 1970s and gave political momentum to the struggle between Al Khalifa and civil society.

Seeing the Bahraini case through a Gramscian lens, the most noteworthy part about intellectuals includes several trends, along with the ideological development of Arab nationalism. It relates, as will be shown in chapter 4, to the failure of the old cadres of the Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM) to connect themselves ideologically to Bahraini civil society as Al Khalifa expected; the rise and retreat of the New Arab Left as counter-hegemonic intellectuals between the early 1970s and the late 1970s; and the internal split of Shia political activism and the changing role of some Shia intellectuals toward revolution in the same period. These intellectual trends showed that Gramsci's observation of intellectuals might not be static and timeless. Under revival pressure after the British withdrawal in 1971, these intellectual movements corresponded to the interplay between national, regional and international socio-political dynamics and then had an influence on Bahrain's regional policy in the 1970s.

Again, such intellectual movements also corresponded to the process of passive revolution in Bahrain during this period. This interplay then reflects the extent to which intellectuals can be identified as either counter-hegemony or just opposition. The major difference between these categorisations lies in whether or not they reject ‘the systemic, ideological and institutional bases of the regime as a whole’.¹⁹⁷ Furthermore, it also relates to a counter-hegemonic project beyond a ‘simple coalition among different social groups [and their] own autonomous interests’, one of unifying different social forces around the formation of a national-popular collective will.¹⁹⁸ That is, in the case of Bahrain, Arab nationalism.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to elaborate the theoretical framework of Gramsci through an integration of historical sociology and later Gramscian scholars’ reconceptualizations of Gramsci’s insights. It has also displayed signposts indicating how such a reconstructed Gramscian framework is to be empirically linked to the case of Bahrain in this thesis. As the introduction stated, this thesis aims to offer an alternative approach to IR and eclecticist ones by following in the same vein as some scholars who have attempted to intervene in the discussion of foreign policy in IRME from the traditions of historical sociology.¹⁹⁹ Therefore, the chapter has outlined three interrelated concepts – development, ideology and struggle, informed by Gramsci, that allow a historical sociological investigation of ideologies and their interplay with socio-political dynamics, which becomes social drivers for state regional policies in international relations in the Middle East. In particular, I highlight, in the last section on struggle, how other histories of Arab nationalism can be brought into IRME, and through these I further explain Bahrain’s policy towards regional alignment in the

¹⁹⁷ Stein, ‘Conceptions of Israel and the Formation of Egyptian Foreign Policy, 1952-1981’, 52.

¹⁹⁸ Im, ‘Hegemony and Counter-Hegemony in Gramsci’, 148.

¹⁹⁹ Halliday, *The Middle East in International Relations: Power, Politics and Ideology*, 41–72; Stein, ‘Conceptions of Israel and the Formation of Egyptian Foreign Policy, 1952-1981’; Stein, ‘The “Camp David Consensus”: Ideas, Intellectuals, and the Division of Labor in Egypt’s Foreign Policy toward Israel’; Stein, *Representing Israel in Modern Egypt: Ideas, Intellectuals and Foreign Policy from Nasser to Mubarak*; Allinson, *The Struggle for The State in Jordan: The Social Origins of Alliances in the Middle East*.

1970s. Through the reconstruction of Gramsci in this chapter, I will reason in the following chapters how the formation and evolution of ideology is conditioned by late-coming capitalist social formation (development), but its impact on state regional policy may also be contingent on a political struggle among different social forces. More significantly, I will argue that Bahrain's policy towards regional alignment between 1971 and 1981 closely pertains to the ideological development of Arab nationalism and evolves with the political struggle between hegemony and counter-hegemony in this period. Such a claim certainly needs more historical evidence to support it, and thus the empirical analyses in this thesis begin.

3 DEVELOPMENT AND BAHRAINI SOCIAL FORMATION UNDER COLONIALISM: CONTRADICTIONS, CLASS AND MOVEMENTS

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate Bahraini social formation under British colonialism and thereby the social bases for Arab nationalism as a modern ideology are examined through the concept of development introduced in the previous chapter. It mainly addresses two questions: first, what explains the origins of Arab nationalism in Bahrain along with the emergence of different social forces in this period? And second, what were the results left by British colonialism as to the ideological development of Arab nationalism in Bahrain? By further elucidating the concept of development in the Gramscian framework outlined in the theoretical chapter, this chapter also serves as a background for the remaining empirical chapters in this thesis. While the concept of development lays the analytical foundations of my application of Gramsci's anatomies of ideologies, intellectuals and (counter-)hegemony, this chapter sets a departure point for this thesis to conduct a historical sociological investigation of the case of Bahrain. Therefore, it must be noted that my focus at this stage, in the present chapter, does not proceed to the analysis of Bahrain's regional policy; rather, it moves on to an analytical history of Bahraini social formation and its relation to Arab nationalism in the British colonial era through the lens of political economy.

As noted earlier, in chapter 2, although Gramsci acknowledges the capacity of social agencies in his analysis of ideology, he never rejects the significance of analysing social structures. With the inheritance of Marxist traditions, he also acknowledges the significance of seeing histories through an abstraction of the changing mode of production as a historical conjuncture. Such a conjuncture usually occurs under international pressure at the moment when capitalist social relations are introduced to, combined with and transformed in certain societies. This rationale substantiates the concept of development in my reformulation of a Gramscian framework and supports the main argument of this chapter: Under the influence of British colonialism as a conduit through which Bahraini social formation was

connected to international capitalism, Arab nationalism formed as a modern ideology representing the contradictions and emergence of different social forces in Bahrain. Ever since deriving from and evolving as intellectual and popular movements, Arab nationalism tended to expose the contradictions within Bahraini society, in addition to its ultimate goal of Arab national unity. Therefore, by the time of Bahrain's independence, different social forces around nationalism continued to fuel the struggle within Bahraini society, which influenced the extent to which a 'national-popular collective will' could be organised.

To substantiate my argument, this chapter draws on other sociological and historical work to complement my reformulation of Gramsci as it applies to the case of Bahrain, and thus to examine the early formation of Arab nationalism in Bahrain under British colonialism. To this end, the chapter takes a particular approach to the origins of Arab nationalism by examining its relationship with capitalist development. The first section of this chapter proceeds with a juxtaposition of Tom Naim's and Nazih Ayubi's insights and conceptualises how uneven and combined capitalist formation relates to the origins of nationalism in peripheral areas. It specifies how contradictory social forces around nationalism arose due to inter-societal logics. Then, the chapter outlines Bahraini social formation along with the role of British colonialism in this process, especially Bahrain's modernisation whipped up by colonial rule. The process of modernisation corresponds to British imperial interests involved in geopolitical and capitalist competition in the Gulf and to changing class relations in Bahrain. When the process polarised social relations, it also had some effects on Arab nationalism in Bahrain. In the final section of the chapter, I outline these effects and argue that the process, also called 'willed ideology', as conceived by Gramsci, of the ruling class, was informed by British colonialism. Such an ideology was used in support of colonial-rule tactics of dividing ethno-sectarian groups. It was contradictory to burgeoning Arab nationalism, which derived from civil society as an 'organic ideology' and one of the major social forces attempting to build a national-popular collective will. Therefore, I further argue, there are two characteristics of Arab nationalism in Bahrain that can be identified: first, labour activism is one of the crucial components of understanding Arab nationalism as a modern ideology in Bahrain; and second, Arab nationalism had an ideological disconnection with the Al Khalifa regime

in the British protectorate era. In the final section of the chapter, I outline the results of the long British colonial era.

3.1 Understanding the Formation of Nationalism: Thesis of Development

The purpose of this thesis is to provide a historical sociological explanation of the relations between Arab nationalism and Bahrain's policy towards Gulf alignment. It seeks to go beyond some existing accounts by looking through a Gramscian lens. This lens allows an investigation of the social bases for the formation of Arab nationalism and its relation to state regional policy by examining some characteristics of colonial history and late-developing capitalist social formation, in countries like Bahrain. In doing so, in this chapter, it is important to reiterate that Gramsci, as shown in the previous chapter, noticed the significance of international capitalism to the late-developing social formation of 'the political' and 'the social' instances that are rearticulated following what Gramsci called a 'historically concrete combination' in the encounter between pre-capitalist and capitalist social relations.¹ In particular, he knew that the 'unevenness' between advanced and late-developed capitalist formation created variations in the development of ideologies and intellectual orientations. Furthermore, a 'combination' of different social formations gave rise to newly amalgamated social relations, which have intrinsic contradictions that are expressed in the struggles among various social forces, along with the process of capitalist production. What do unevenness and combination, the most remarkable characteristics of the concept of development, mean to an ideology like Arab nationalism? And how do contradictions and social forces derive and have influence on the formation and ideological development of Arab nationalism?

3.1.1 Capitalist development and periphery

In departure from the traditions of Marxism, Gramsci's concern with the development of capitalism laid the foundations of his analysis of various topics, albeit including his rejection of economicism and class reductionism that has sometimes

¹ Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 182.

been unduly stressed or else interpreted as a post-Marxism version² of ‘soft Gramscianism’.³ His understanding of capitalist formation encompassed the interplay of international and internal relations of nation-states. It shows a ‘tendency to establish a world system of which individual social formations are component parts’.⁴ This social formation then results in a ‘historically concrete combination’ through which ideologies are disseminated from advanced developed countries to less developed ones. I argue that nationalism conceived in this thesis is counted as a modern political ideology and movement of a kind sharing some characteristics reflecting the impact of social change. It originated from its first manifestation in the French Revolution and later spread to other parts of the world. The dissemination, however, did not usually lead to the expression of qualitatively identical nationalism between its birthplace and other destinations. Nor did it occur through a peaceful process of promulgating European values but rather via ‘coercive diffusion’, usually through imperialist expansion.⁵ Thus, a ‘historical concrete combination’ has never been seen, qualitatively and quantitatively, as alike between these two sites, between advanced and late-coming capitalist formation, and between imperial heartlands and colonies.

Following the claim noted here, it is useful to draw on the insights of Marxist readings of nationalism, such as Tom Nairn’s work on uneven (and combined) development. As a supplement to the reconstructed Gramscian framework adopted in this thesis, Nairn’s work helps our discussion on the social bases of nationalism forming in late-coming capitalist society, particularly the case of Bahrain as a British protectorate: a social formation in a given period of time during which capitalist development came into being as the dominant mode of production linking Bahraini society to international society. For Nairn, ‘Nationalism is a crucial, fairly central feature of the modern capitalist development of world history’.⁶ Its origins were driven

² The oft-referred post-Marxist Gramscian work is Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 2014); David Howarth, ‘Gramsci, Hegemony and Post-Marxism’, in *Antonio Gramsci*, ed. Mark McNally (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 195–213.

³ Thomas, ‘Modernity as “Passive Revolution”’: Gramsci and the Fundamental Concepts of Historical Materialism’, 65.

⁴ Alex Callinicos, *Making History: Agency, Structure and Change in Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity, 1987), 245n10.

⁵ Halliday, ‘The Middle East and Conceptions of “International Society”’, 10–13.

⁶ Tom Nairn, ‘The Modern Janus’, *New Left Review* 1/94 (1975): 5.

by ‘the machinery of [the] world political economy’ and ‘associated with more specific features of that process’, including uneven development.⁷ Ever since capitalism evolved in the first place in Western Europe, the agenda of progress informed by the Enlightenment and classical political economy was employed by bourgeois classes, which later fermented imperialism.⁸ On the periphery, the late-developing area conceived in the idea of progress, such a new ideological force did, however, bring about the dark side of progress. As Nairn further adds:

In these less-developed lands the elites soon discovered that tranquil incorporation into the cosmopolitan technology was possible for only a few of them at a time. The other, the majority, saw themselves excluded from the action, rather than invited politely to join in; trampled over rather than taught the rules of the game; exploited rather than made partners.⁹

Despite sharing the nature of nationalism as an ideological form corresponding to the content of capitalist and geopolitical competition among states, the formation of nationalism on the periphery was rather distinctive, more than its counterparts in the capitalist heartland of Western Europe. It was fuelled by the peripheric elites, or intellectuals, who expected to catch up with progress by learning and ‘adopting the cutting edge technologies, institutions and practices from the leading state in the international system’.¹⁰ Yet, they attempted ‘taking things into [their] own hands’ and contesting a concrete form of the progress that ‘had taken them by the throat’. Although mimetic reforms were necessary for the progress they wished, they resisted ‘the mere implantation of these things by direct foreign intervention or control’.¹¹ To achieve this goal, forging the idea of separation from European counterparts became necessary to peripheric intellectuals for the mobilisation of material resources needed in support of their take-over project. This international-national interplay also represented a process of combining pre-capitalist and capitalist modes of production in different instances into a sociological amalgamation that fed content into nationalism. More importantly, this was, I argue, a historical process of rearticulating ‘the political’

⁷ Nairn, 8.

⁸ Nairn, 10.

⁹ Nairn, 11.

¹⁰ Alexander Anievas, ‘Revolutions and International Relations: Rediscovering the Classical Bourgeois Revolutions’, *European Journal of International Relations* 21, no. 4 (2015): 846.

¹¹ Nairn, ‘The Modern Janus’, 11.

and 'the social' aspects in dialectic ways whereby intellectuals organise the people's will as a national collective will in a spirit of nationalism.

However, as these projects were envisaged and even delivered, such a combination was not without a cost. The periphery was not in fact inducted into a 'single forward march' so that take-over projects could have a full-version copy of the experiences of other advanced developing cases. As Nairn further argues,

...in reality, these lands [of the periphery] found themselves compelled to attempt radical, competitive short-cuts in order to avoid being trampled over or left behind. The logistic of these short-cuts brought in factors quite absent from the universalizing philosophy of Progress.¹²

There was a sense of 'historic backwardness' corresponding to the periphery's objective of catching up. It was driven by a philosophy of progress, but under the pressure of capitalist competition, which usually came along with geopolitical competition. In the Middle East, this was an overarching theme applicable to and underlying the early formation of Arab nationalism, or 'the Arab awakening' in the late nineteenth century,¹³ and its later rigorous bourgeoning after the first Arab-Israel war. What was more important to Arab nationalism itself is that it shared, I argue, some traits of nationalism in other peripheral areas. That is, while capitalism 'spread remorselessly over the world to unify human society into one more or less connected story for the first time', it also brought about the inevitable result of not just uneven development but also combined development of capitalist formations in peripheral areas: 'a perilous and convulsive new fragmentation of that society'.¹⁴ This fragmentation was not abstract but concrete, when seen along with the emergence of somewhat reassembled social forces in new amalgamated social relations that corresponded with changes in the mode of production. These forces, more often than not antagonistic, gave succour to nationalism on this soil economically exploited and politically dominated by colonial powers. As a result, nationalism on the periphery was also 'the so[c]io-historical cost of this rapid implantation of capitalism',¹⁵ which

¹² Nairn, 12.

¹³ Antonius, *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement*.

¹⁴ Nairn, 'The Modern Janus', 12.

¹⁵ Nairn, 12.

shaped ‘awareness of the European danger’ as well as being ‘an attempt to imitate Europe in order to offer a better resistance to it’.¹⁶ That was the most noteworthy characteristic of nationalism in most cases on the periphery, not least Bahrain.

3.1.2 *Class and contradictions*

I argue that Nairn’s overall analysis of the nationalism in peripheral societies seen through the lens of uneven and combined development resonates with Gramsci’s account of ideology from the perspective of ‘the international’. As noted briefly, earlier, the origins of nationalism in these societies were accompanied by their social transformation, which redefined individuals and the social relations of intrinsic contradictions. Such relations can be conceptualised in the tradition of historical materialism as ‘class’ among various definitions; but, as Erik Olin Wright argues, ‘the hallmark of Marxist discussions of class is the emphasis on the concept of exploitation’.¹⁷ Class is ‘the collective social expression of the fact of exploitation, the way in which exploitation is embodied in a social structure’ defined by production. Accordingly, class also refers to ‘a group of persons in a community identified by their position in the whole system of social production, defined above all according to their relationship (primarily in terms of the degree of ownership or control) to the conditions of production ... and to other classes’.¹⁸ In this vein, exploitation substantiates the meaning of intrinsic contradictions or ‘intrinsic antagonism’ among classes that anticipate an inevitable struggle¹⁹.

However, from his observations of peripheral European societies like Poland, Spain or Portugal, Gramsci once reminded us that unlike more advanced capitalist societies with quite polarised class relations— antagonism between the capitalist and proletariat classes – but where ‘the ruling class possesses [more] political and

¹⁶ Samir Amin, *Unequal Development: An Essay on the Social Formations of Peripheral Capitalism*, trans. Brian Pearce (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1976), 300.

¹⁷ Erik Olin Wright, *Class Structure and Income Determination* (New York and London: Academic Press, 1979), 14. For a typology of definitions of class, see also Wright’s discussion in the same book particularly chapter 1.

¹⁸ G. E. M. De Ste. Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World: From the Archaic Age to the Arab Conquests* (Duckworth, 1983), 43–44.

¹⁹ Wright, *Class Structure and Income Determination*, 22.

organisational reserves',²⁰ peripheral societies see that:

...a broad spectrum of intermediate classes stretches between the proletariat and capitalism: classes which seek to carry on policies of their own, with ideologies which influence broad strata of the proletariat, but which particularly affect the peasant masses.²¹

When peripheric elites or intellectuals that were derived as new social forces and major social agents driving nationalism in these societies became such intermediate classes, a picture of class relations in the Middle East emerges due to the characteristics of development. As Nazih Ayubi notes,

...modes of production in the Middle East are often not singular and uni-dimensional but rather are articulated (i.e. two or more modes can often coexist and interlink) ... [and there is] little correspondence among the various 'instances' or manifestations of structural power in society.²²

Such co-existence and amalgamation of modes of production, revealing its particular meaning in a form of combination, usually created contradictions within society. But, neither of these productive forces could ever crush the other; instead, they were only dominated and compelled by one of them in the process of social formation.²³ These forces generated a distinctive configuration of class relations. This distinctiveness was usually muddled with colonial intervention and gave rise to some crucial ideological components of intrinsic contradictions represented in nationalism on the periphery.

When we take such contradictions as one of the basic traits of capitalist formation on the periphery, the critical question for understanding the case of Bahrain, as this thesis proceeds, does not hinge on why the political struggle has never been solved by one single dominant class in support of creating Arab nationalism as a national collective will. Bahrain is not like some other Arab states, e.g. Egypt, Syria

²⁰ Gramsci, *Antonio Gramsci: Selections from Political Writings 1921-1926*, 408.

²¹ Gramsci, 409.

²² Ayubi, *Over-Stating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East*, 26.

²³ Jamie Allinson has made a contribution in specifying the difference between articulation and combination. For the former, it is applied to the analyses of certain relations of production by seeing different socio-political instances operated so as to move beyond 'mode of production' as an abstract to social formation as a concrete historical investigation. For the latter, as Allinson notes, it 'is a particular subset of articulation in which one of the modes... impels the simultaneous transformation and reconstitution of the other'. See Allinson, *The Struggle for The State in Jordan: The Social Origins of Alliances in the Middle East*, 37.

and Iraq, where the will of the dominant class maintained its close ideological links to popular movements in civil society and was encompassed within Arab nationalism in various ways after revolution. ‘Owing to the lack of class hegemony’, as Ayubi further argues, ‘politics in such a society [of oil-producing Gulf states] is not characterised by an orderly process of aggregating demands but by *acts of capturing the state and acts of resisting the state*’²⁴. Therefore, an alternative question this thesis seeks to answer is how such a political struggle proceeded in a dynamic equilibrium, corresponding to late-capitalist formation and nationalism on the periphery, of state-society relations. This is a process, in Gramsci’s term, in the struggle between hegemony and counter-hegemony, which not only described Bahraini social formation in the British colonial era, but also carried on in Bahrain’s independence phase.

At this point, it is not difficult to find that this chapter has, thus far, gradually taken a detour from Nairn’s discussion and initial concerns. Nairn continues in his seminal article to investigate how nationalism on the semi-periphery, i.e. Germany, Italy and Japan in the first half of the twentieth century, injected new elements into nationalism in the core, e.g. in England and France, that shaped ‘the new climate of world politics’, of nationalism.²⁵ As a result, a more chauvinistic and reactionary version of nationalism involving ‘a metropolitan ruling-class conspiracy’ emerged and was inflamed by geopolitical and capitalist competition among these states.²⁶ Contradictions, intrinsic to capitalist relations and lying beneath nationalist ideologies, among different socio-political loci then demonstrated themselves in physical and violent ways such that inter-state relations experienced a ‘cataclysm’ on the international scale, especially in the first three decades of the twentieth century.²⁷ Despite it is important to know how such contradictions resulted in a nationalism that substantiated the ideological dimension of interstate competition, as Nairn shows, I maintain that in the case of Bahrain it is more illuminating to explicate contradictions represented *within* nationalism on the national scale than those shown *among*

²⁴ Emphasis added. Ayubi, *Over-Stating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East*, 25.

²⁵ Nairn, ‘The Modern Janus’, 15.

²⁶ Nairn, 17.

²⁷ For the social origins, development and consequence of the First World War, see Alexander Anievas, ed., *Cataclysm 1914: The First World War and the Making of Modern World Politics* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

nationalisms in the international arena. While the latter demonstrated the conflict among capitalist forces on the international scale, the former was affected by its resonance. During the period that the British informal empire was deeply involved in imperial competition and mobilising resources needed in support of its geopolitical and capitalist interests, the ‘national’ context of Bahrain within British colonialist tutelage became ‘a point of arrival within the international conditioning of capitalist expansion’.²⁸ This is the foremost claim running through the following sections and chapters in support of the task of highlighting the evolution of Arab nationalism in Bahrain and the internal sociopolitical dynamics of Bahrain’s policy towards regional alignment in this thesis.

Therefore, the purpose of shifting my focus to contradictions *within* nationalism is to help substantiate my argument in the present chapter and beyond: British colonial rule played a crucial role in linking Bahraini social formation to international capitalist relations. Such a process of uneven and combined development with its intrinsic contradictions, however, derived antagonistic social forces around the origins of nationalism on the periphery. In the case of Bahrain, the struggle among them corresponded to not only Bahraini state formation but also the ideological development of Arab nationalism throughout both the British colonial era and Bahrain’s independence phase. In other words, Arab nationalism derived from contradictions and evolved through struggles. Such a statement deviates how Arab nationalism has been treated in mainstream IR studies, which see it as an identity attached to either political culture or norms. Moreover, it also takes another approach to Arab nationalism by defining it as a modern ideology in relation to capitalist formation. The following sections and the rest of the thesis will proceed by centring around this statement.

3.2 Bahraini Social Formation under British Colonialism

What does a theoretical claim about nationalism in peripheral areas through the lens of uneven and combined capitalist development mean to the Bahraini case? And

²⁸ Morton, ‘Waiting for Gramsci: State Formation, Passive Revolution and the International’, 615.

how does it integrate with a Gramscian framework to explain the social bases of the relationship of Arab nationalism and state regional policy? These questions were left open in the abstract picture of nationalism on the periphery as seen through the theoretical lens of development in the previous section.

The abstract certainly needs more historical evidence to support it and give rise to the concrete.²⁹ Thus, the present section sets out a historical and sociological investigation of Bahrain in the British colonial era with two takes on Bahraini social formation. First, it examines Bahraini social formation under British colonial tutelage, especially Bahraini modernisation initiated in the 1920s corresponding to the British imperial design for geopolitical and capitalist competition in the Middle East. Second, it then outlines changing class relations in Bahrain following Bahraini modernisation and the discovery and commodification of oil.

3.2.1 Beyond geopolitics: combination with global capitalism

As suggested in the thesis under development, it is argued that the origins of Arab nationalism in Bahrain were related to Bahraini capitalist formation under British colonialism. This statement, however, does not mark the arrival of the British informal empire in Bahrain in the early nineteenth century as the starting point of Bahraini capitalist formation and the origins of nationalism. The formation of Arab nationalism in Bahrain, I argue, was a response of civil society to the realisation of the sociality of capitalist relation whose genesis of such a social formation lay in the secret of primitive accumulation: a ‘process of divorcing the producer from the means of production’.³⁰ Following the thesis of uneven and combined development, this is a historical conjuncture at which the pre-capitalist relation was then dominated by the capitalist one and to which international socio-political dynamics gave incentives.³¹ As Robbie Shilliam suggests, ‘...when the imperatives imposed by the capital relation travelled

²⁹ Karl Marx, ‘Grundrisse’, 2015, 34, Marxist Internet Archives, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/grundrisse.pdf>.

³⁰ Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 (London: Penguin, 1990), 875.

³¹ In his case study of Jordanian social formation, Jamie Allinson has integrated the concept of primitive accumulation into the lens of uneven and combined development, which could be applied broadly to post-colonial cases (late-coming capitalist states). See Allinson, *The Struggle for The State in Jordan: The Social Origins of Alliances in the Middle East*, 30–31.

from the heartland of English capitalism into differentially developed socio-political orders, these different constellations of social forces gave rise to different forms of social transformation'.³² From this historical moment, 'the political' and 'the social' instances were rearticulated along with the advent of capitalism, and the capitalist mode of production was combined with the other pre-capitalist one. The combination set some historical conditions as well as compelled the process of social formation.

Since the sixteenth century, social relations in the Gulf were closely tied to the trading network and situated in the middle of trade routes between the Indian Ocean and Europe.³³ The predominant social relation in this area was a tributary mode of production practised in the concrete form of speculative trade (*mudarabah*), upon which the ties of tribal families and merchants, or traders, were built through a form of protection fees (*Khuwa*): the former offered military protection to the latter and other inhabitants of coastal towns as well as subjugated them to its absolute authority.³⁴ Such a social relation and mode of production, as Khaldoun Hasan Al-Naqeeb argues, lasted for at least two centuries until the British grand imperial design in the nineteenth century was employed in the Gulf area. Imperial supremacy was realised by subjugating speculative trade 'to the complete control of commercial agencies, and the ruling [tribal] families to protectorate treaties'. Imperial subjugation eliminated 'the seasonal impact of [speculative trade]' and 'in the end destroy[ed] local, long-distance mercantile fleets'.³⁵ However, at this point, British imperial interests were mainly driven by strategic motives rather than economic ones, for the major concern was how 'to establish a *cordon sanitaire* around British India', and thus most places in the Gulf area, with the exception of the ports of Aden and Muscat, were able to preserve their social relations to a certain extent.³⁶

³² Shilliam, 'Hegemony and the Unfashionable Problematic of "Primitive Accumulation"', 63.

³³ Khaldoun Hasan Al-Naqeeb, *Society and State in the Gulf and Arab Peninsula: A Different Perspective*, trans. Kenny L.M. (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 6–8.

³⁴ Al-Naqeeb, 9–15.

³⁵ Al-Naqeeb, 27.

³⁶ Emphasis in origin. James Onley, 'Britain's Informal Empire in the Gulf, 1820-1971', *Journal of Social Affairs* 22, no. 87 (2005): 42–43.

As such, though signing the General Treaty of Peace with Al Khalifa, among others, in the 1820s,³⁷ the British colonial intervention, in the case of Bahrain, was quite late, not until 1900, as the forward policy of the British Viceroy of India was employed in Bahrain in competition with other European powers.³⁸ It was followed by advanced British penetration into Bahraini affairs post-World War One, in the 1920s, through modernisation.³⁹ While social and political instances of existing tributary relations were rearticulated through the process of modernisation supervised by British colonialism, it was also the historical conjuncture at which Bahrain began its combined social formation with a dominant capitalist mode of production, followed by a nascent stage of industrial oil development.

It is noteworthy during this process that ‘the international’ factor was a significant driving force behind the modernisation process. It brought the consequences of geopolitical and capitalist competition, in which Britain was deeply involved, to Bahrain. Ever since the dawn of the twentieth century, Britain was changing its policy toward Bahrain. In support of the competition in the Gulf and Indian area, British political agents in Bahrain were granted more powers by the Government of India. So, Bahrain was integrated ‘into the sphere of informal empire as an overseas imperial territory and laid the foundations for the establishment of the new administration’, which then supported the British mandate in Iraq.⁴⁰ After 1919, this was through ‘instructions to seek the amelioration of local government and to turn public opinion in favour of British rule’.⁴¹ The colonial enforcement by British political agents, as historian Nelida Fuccaro argues, was driven by their aim for a ‘civilising mission of empire as a process of regeneration of state and society’. However, since the process was opposed by some tribal leaders in Bahrain who saw it

³⁷ David Commins, *The Gulf States: A Modern History* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 78.

³⁸ Omar AlShehabi, ‘Political Movements in Bahrain across the Long Twentieth Century (1900-2015)’, in *The Oxford Handbooks of Contemporary Middle-Eastern and North African History*, ed. Amal Ghazal and Jens Hanssen (Oxford University Press, 2017), 2–3, <http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199672530.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199672530-e-27>.

³⁹ Al-Naqeeb, *Society and State in the Gulf and Arab Peninsula: A Different Perspective*, 27.

⁴⁰ Nelida Fuccaro, *Histories of City and State in the Persian Gulf: Manama since 1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 113.

⁴¹ Fuccaro, 116.

as ‘the imposition of a colonial regime’,⁴² it did not proceed smoothly and there was uncertainty in the internal debate in the British government until 1934 and the commodification and export of oil.⁴³

This was a critical conjuncture in Bahraini social formation whose capitalist sociality was realised through oil commodification, and thus the characteristics of uneven and combined development were ‘fully activated under the specific socio-historical conditions of generalised commodity production’.⁴⁴ Following the collapse of the pearling industry in 1929, oil commodification gave substantive content to Bahraini capitalist social formation. The material resources of Al Khalifa rule no longer solely relied on tributes. Oil commodification at the hands of foreign oil companies offered Al Khalifa another source of income. It then portrayed the state of Bahrain as representing some characteristics of the rentier economy realised after World War Two in the 1950s. As Al-Naqeeb notes:

[T]he national economy of this kind of state does not depend directly upon petroleum but in an indirect way, namely state or public expenditures which become a conduit for pumping in oil revenue. This brings out the central role which the state plays (from the standpoint of its being the receiver of the oil revenue) in the economic and social life of the inhabitants, but which is different from the role of other states which depend upon taxes and the productive service sectors of the national economy. Oil revenue makes the rentier state relatively independent of the customary sources of power and authority in other states, and the rentier state therefore enjoys a flexibility of action and a freedom of manoeuvre which to a large extent surpass situations in which the state gets its revenue from taxes and productive activity.⁴⁵

Such a process brought about an effect of combined social formation in Bahrain: the political authority of Al Khalifa was preserved along with modernisation supported by oil commodification. The process towards transformation was directed by British political agents, and it qualitatively changed the trajectory of Bahraini development and its linkage to the global capitalist system. While Al Khalifa’s political authority counted on oil revenue from the global capitalist market, the ways in which political

⁴² Fuccaro, 117.

⁴³ Fuccaro, 118–19.

⁴⁴ Jamie Allinson and Alexander Anievas, ‘The Uses and Misuses of Uneven and Combined Development: An Anatomy of a Concept’, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 22, no. 1 (2009): 49.

⁴⁵ Al-Naqeeb, *Society and State in the Gulf and Arab Peninsula: A Different Perspective*, 82.

and social instances were articulated, along with Bahraini social formation, were closely tied and subject to sociopolitical dynamics on the regional and international scales ever since. More importantly, for Bahraini social relations per se, this process also changed the state-society equilibrium and witnessed changing class relations.

3.2.2 *Changing class relations*

In the Gulf area, the application of class analysis can sometimes be tricky as social stratification also corresponds to different categorisations. In the case of Bahrain, although its population has a diverse ethnic and sectarian background, a picture of pre-capitalist social relations (defined earlier as social relations in the pre-modernisation and pre-oil commodification phase) can be also drawn, by and large, by the ways in which Bahraini people acquired the means of production for living. Accordingly, on the one hand, even though Bahraini Sunni had been mainly composed of two traditions of origin – *Hawala* and *Najdi*, of which the former refers to families originating from coastal areas of the Gulf, and the latter tribes from Najd area in Arabia, they had mostly resided in urban areas, living on pearls, dates, trading and controlling primary economic resources.⁴⁶ On the other hand, when Bahraini Shia had arguably consisted mostly of some original Arab inhabitants before Al Khalifa came and other Persian immigrants – the former referred to as *Baharna* and the latter *Ajam*⁴⁷ – most of them had resided in villages and lived as peasants.⁴⁸ The categories here are certainly not absolute when one considers some exceptions; for example, there had been some urban Shia working in trade and commerce and some *Ajams* had been Sunnis. Yet, such a categorisation helps us to set a departure point for class analysis, seeing class as a social relation for Bahraini transformation from pre-capitalist relations to capitalist ones.

⁴⁶ Fuad I. Khuri, *Tribe and State in Bahrain: The Transformation of Social and Political Authority in an Arab State* (Chicago and London: the University of Chicago Press, 1980), 2–4.

⁴⁷ Mohammed Ghanim Al-Rumaihi, 'Social and Political Change in Bahrain: Since the First World War' (PhD thesis, Durham University, 1973), 46; Omar AlShehabi, 'Contested Modernity: Divided Rule and the Birth of Sectarianism, Nationalism, and Absolutism in Bahrain', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 44, no. 3 (2017): 336.

⁴⁸ Khuri, *Tribe and State in Bahrain: The Transformation of Social and Political Authority in an Arab State*, 4.

By highlighting the contours of Bahraini pre-capitalist social relations along the lines of urban areas and villages, the significance of knowing such relations lies in knowing that this change corresponded to the later formation of different classes and social forces under international pressure. In other words, when this thesis later explores the political aspects of Bahraini social formation, it is necessary to locate class formation in the Gulf in a picture in which ‘Gulf capitalism arose as an integral part of the making of the global political economy’.⁴⁹ For Bahrain in the pre-capitalist epoch, in addition to the symbiosis between merchants and Al Khalifa tied together by *Khuwa*, Al Khalifa also allied itself with the chiefs of other tribes by granting them conquered lands. As a land-owning class, they had accumulated capital which some of them later invested in the pearl industry, becoming merchants in urban areas and the subaltern class of Al Khalifa’s rule. In contrast, other members of tribes that had not been granted lands became peasants, pearl divers and fishermen, gradually forming another class along with other the original inhabitants of villages in subordinate strata.⁵⁰ Within such relations, the social ties between these two classes had bonded with the coercive power of the ruling class so that ‘production’ was due to political compulsion rather than purely economic incentives:⁵¹ ‘slavery was common and several thousand were pearl fishermen. There was no public market but slaves sometimes changed hands’.⁵² Al Khalifa and its allied merchants and landowners had dominated various roles in politics, whereas the other majority had been what Mohammed Ghanim Al-Rumaihi, a Bahraini scholar whose research on *Social and political change in Bahrain since the First World War* was ‘rather frowned upon by [Al Khalifa] as having a leftist tone’,⁵³ called ‘the politically unconscious masses’.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Adam Hanieh, ‘Capital, Labor, and the State: Rethinking the Political Economy of Oil in the Gulf’, in *The Oxford Handbooks of Contemporary Middle-Eastern and North African History*, ed. Amal Ghazal and Jens Hanssen (Oxford University Press, 2015), 7, <http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199672530.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199672530-e-3>.

⁵⁰ Al-Rumaihi, ‘Social and Political Change in Bahrain: Since the First World War’, 254.

⁵¹ Allinson, *The Struggle for The State in Jordan: The Social Origins of Alliances in the Middle East*, 44.

⁵² Suzanne Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem* (Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 2003), 266.

⁵³ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, ‘FCO 8/3493 Bahrain External Relations’, 1980, British National Archives.

⁵⁴ Al-Rumaihi, ‘Social and Political Change in Bahrain: Since the First World War’, 255.

Until the 1920s and 1930s, class relations in Bahrain changed their formation following the logics of primitive accumulation: ‘the historical production of the precondition of capitalism: the potential wage labourer free from both means of production and from the (direct) coercion to produce’.⁵⁵ These changes brought political effects to Bahrain in two ways under the pressure of international social change. First, due to more competitive pearling production in Japan, the collapse of the pearl industry in Bahrain in the 1930s led to a power reshuffle within the ruling class. Some landowners, having survived the collapse of pearling production, became the new upper class with Al Khalifa. As Al-Rumaihi notes, they ‘were the main beneficiaries of the transfer of their allegiance to the British. Many of them became ever richer as oil revenues began to be paid and land values rose with the needs of the oil company’.⁵⁶ However, other merchants who no longer relied on pearling production retreated from the circle of the ruling class, and they formed another middle class by working in trading businesses affiliated to the oil industry.⁵⁷ Second, while pearling production was replaced by oil production, people who used to be direct producers of pearls under political coercion were freed from such relations and became waged labourers working in new industries. Their ties to the dominant mode of production were now not bound by their political subservience but more by yielding to surplus labour. In the sense of what Allinson called ‘dual freedom’,⁵⁸ they were freed from the status of slavery in pearling in tributary relations and in turn sold their labour freely to the market in capitalist relations, acquiring a new means of production for living.

3.2.3 *The emergence of ruling capitalist class and ‘intermediate classes’*

As for my concern with such class relations during change, their significance lies at the historical moment in which, first, the Al Khalifa regime came into being a ruling capitalist class and, second, various groups of merchants and intellectuals emerged as middle classes.

⁵⁵ Allinson, *The Struggle for The State in Jordan: The Social Origins of Alliances in the Middle East*, 30.

⁵⁶ Al-Rumaihi, ‘Social and Political Change in Bahrain: Since the First World War’, 256.

⁵⁷ Al-Rumaihi, 256–57.

⁵⁸ Allinson, *The Struggle for The State in Jordan: The Social Origins of Alliances in the Middle East*, 30.

The rationale of seeing the Al Khalifa regime as a ruling capitalist class has its analytical purpose in this thesis. It does not completely reject a neopatriarchal reading, such as Hisham Sharabi⁵⁹, but just to highlight a tribal regime's status in a social structure of which its material substance is revealed through capitalist formation. For the modern state of Bahrain, the status of the Al Khalifa regime as a capitalist class has been formed and operated by a circulationist rentier economy and through a patronage system. Such a social structure enables the accumulation of the regime's capital yielded from oil commodification and export and thereby, with colonialist backing up as well, capital transforms into the regime's political leverage among different newly formed classes. That is to say, the rationale behind the ways in the Al Khalifa regime intervenes politics goes beyond a patrimonial understanding of a tribal regime's survival. But it is about its survival as an emerging ruling capitalist class.

As a ruling class, the Al Khalifa regime's dominant political and economic influence in Bahraini society increased along with Bahrain's late-developing capitalist state formation from the 1930s onwards. Such pervasive influence is exemplified by the case of Shaikh Khalifa bin Salman, Bahraini Prime Minister from 1970 until today, who has arguably been the pivotal figure of Bahraini politics and its connected vast capitalist networks as well. As J.E. Peterson notes, Shaikh Khalifa

appointed government officials including the cabinet, supervised the build-up of the security forces, and allegedly became the richest person in Bahrain with extensive holdings in land, hotels, commercial property (including office buildings leased by government ministries), and profits on government contracts. Family and tribal allies grew rich with him⁶⁰.

Regardless of the intra-regime royal factionalism⁶¹ and at the expense of its potential impact on Bahraini politics, I therefore consider the Al Khalifa regime as a Bahraini ruling capitalist class for my analytical purpose of conceptualising its role in a modernist sense. As such, by using a shorthand of 'Al Khalifa' throughout the rest of

⁵⁹ Hisham Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy: A Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

⁶⁰ J.E. Peterson, 'Bahrain: Reform, Promise and Reality', in *Political Liberalization in the Persian Gulf*, ed. Joshua Teitelbaum (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 158.

⁶¹ Justin Gengler, 'Royal Factionalism, the Khawlid, and the Securitization of "the Shia Problem" in Bahrain', *Journal of Arabian Studies* 3, no. 1 (2013): 53–79.

the thesis, I then examine how Al Khalifa as a ruling capitalist class initiated Bahrain's passive revolution in the 1970s shown in chapter 6.

As for the so-called middle classes, they arose between the upper ruling class and the lower subordinate class as 'intermediate classes'. As noted earlier, Gramsci suggested that the intermediate classes occupy a broader spectrum in peripheral societies and have much more political influence both upwards and downwards. As such, as Aijaz Ahmad argues, they occupy,

...a strategic field in the economy and politics of their countries, thus obtaining powers and initiatives which make it possible for them to struggle for political dominance over other classes, including the bourgeoisie. Thus, these classes play a key role in the construction of political reaction as well as in the process of radicalization and even revolution.⁶²

In Bahrain, and more broadly in the Gulf, even though its larger size and diverse composition was subject to the regime's policy of circulation and distribution of lands and oil wealth, we can still clearly identify them as a newly formed class distinct from the landed aristocracy and traditional merchants⁶³.

As a result of the improved educational system in Bahrain, part of the regime's policy of circulation in the scheme of modernisation, the skeleton of the intermediate classes formed by doctors, journalists, lawyers, engineers etc. harboured more liberal ideas.⁶⁴ Unlike traditional intellectuals, such as clerics whose political role in society had been represented in issues of ethnicity and religion, these newly formed classes of professionals turned to modernistic tendencies along with the process of Bahraini capitalist formation, and they also highlighted their political role instead in labour problems, social reform, nationalist issues and so on.⁶⁵ In this sense, they therefore gradually shaped a role that was able to link both upwards and downwards ideologically to the ruling class and subordinate ones in the process of state formation of Bahrain. Furthermore, their rising political awareness had political implications for

⁶² Aijaz Ahmad, 'Class, Nation, and the State: Intermediate Classes in Peripheral Societies', in *Middle Classes in Development Countries*, ed. Dale L. Johnson (Beverly Hills and London: Sage Publications, 1985), 44.

⁶³ Ayubi, *Over-Stating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East*, 175–76.

⁶⁴ Al-Rumaihi, 'Social and Political Change in Bahrain: Since the First World War', 258.

⁶⁵ Khuri, *Tribe and State in Bahrain: The Transformation of Social and Political Authority in an Arab State*, 241.

Bahraini society as civil society, along with capitalist formation. For this, a Gramscian approach to politics of a late-capitalist state formation presents its value by improving a historical materialist understanding of ‘state’ beyond class reductionism.

3.3 Results of British Colonialism: On ‘the Political’

How do we explain the political aspect, particularly the origins of Arab nationalism in Bahrain, from a Gramscian perspective by understanding Bahraini social formation? The political aspect of Bahraini social formation was, I argue, mainly highlighted by an ideological disconnection between the Al Khalifa regime and Bahraini civil society. In a Gramscian sense, Arab nationalism in Bahrain is best understood as an organic ideology that derived from civil society and contradicted Al Khalifa’s will ideology informed by what Omar AlShehabi called the ‘British colonial lens’. Such a disconnection was definitely not due to differences in ‘false consciousness’ between people in society and the regime, rather it derived from a historical process, conceived in the concept of development. With a colonial lens employed to correspond to Bahraini social formation under British colonialism, an ideological disconnection between the Al Khalifa and Bahraini society existed during this time. In other words, Arab nationalism did not project the willed ideology of the ruling class in Bahrain but only related to intellectual movements driven by the Bahraini middle classes in civil society. It was a time when an organic ideology made political sense in forging a national-popular collective will, which not only resonated with grand ideas of Arab national unity but also linked closely to labour and local nationalist movements in Bahrain.

3.3.1 Colonial lens and willed ideology

It has been little contested that the discovery and export of oil in the 1930s set the historical conditions for Bahraini sociopolitical development in the rest of the twentieth century, and even until today. Most of the literature on Bahrain and more broadly on the Gulf has explained how authoritarian regimes were evolving with and supported by the rentier economy. As Al-Naqeeb has shown above and other rentier state theorists have demonstrated so far, an understanding of the state of Bahrain

revolves around its institutional dimension resonating with Weberian wisdom. In particular, it sheds light on how Bahraini bureaucratic development and Al Khalifa's increasingly authoritarian powers went hand in hand with British colonialism and rentier economic development.⁶⁶ As Khuri says:

Colonial rule and the development of oil are the two major processes that modified the authority system in Bahrain; the first by creating a bureaucracy, and the second by transforming the economic order and the social organization associated with it. The institutionalization of bureaucracy changed the formal structure of authority and modified the mode of interaction among tribe, peasantry, and urban society.⁶⁷

I follow the existing explanation that considers colonialism and rentier economy as offering a basic understanding of the political development of Bahraini social formation. Yet, while this thesis intends to make sense of the formation of Arab nationalism through the lens of development, I focus closely on the ideological dimension of the process of Bahrain's state formation. When oil commodification gave content to Bahraini social formation, what did British colonialism feed ideologically into the historical process alongside which it had an impact on the formation of Arab nationalism? With this question in mind, it also leads us to reflect in a Gramscian sense on whether and how the superstructure (the political) corresponded to the structure (the social) in Bahrain under and after British colonialism.

As shown earlier, nationalism on the periphery derived to represent contradictions as a product of uneven and combined capitalist development. If we accept what Nairn and others have suggested, it could be further argued that the formation of nationalism, a kind of modern political ideology and movement, was inscribed into the process of international social transformation. It was a process alongside which capitalist sociality was realised through British colonialism in Bahrain, one that also led to sociopolitical struggle. As Shilliam suggests from his investigation of the process of knowledge production by illuminating its international

⁶⁶ Khuri, *Tribe and State in Bahrain: The Transformation of Social and Political Authority in an Arab State*; Mahdi Abdalla Al-Tajir, *Bahrain 1920-1945: Britain, the Shaikh and the Administration* (New York: Croom Helm, 1987); Fred Lawson, *Bahrain: The Modernization of Autocracy* (Colorado and London: Westview Press, 1989).

⁶⁷ Fuad I. Khuri, 'From Tribe to State in Bahrain', in *Arab Society: Social Science Perspectives*, ed. Saad Eddin Ibrahim and Nicholas S. Hopkins (Cairo: the American University in Cairo Press, 1985), 432.

dimension:⁶⁸

In the struggle over political authority an attempt is often made by certain classes (or elements within these classes) to import aspects of a 'foreign' political subject that are deemed to valorize their own project for reform. But in grafting on this 'alien' political subject, various *substitutions* are required to compensate for the institutions of social reproduction that, present in the 'home' of the 'alien' subject, are missing in this foreign domain ... Knowledge production [therefore] has to be understood as deriving from more general processes associated with the international dimension of social transformation.⁶⁹

In this regard, when combined Bahraini social formation resonated with British imperial interests, a system of knowledge production derived 'from more general processes associated with the international dimension of social transformation',⁷⁰ the expansion of capitalist sociality into the periphery through colonialism. Furthermore, such a system of knowledge production was imported and imposed on the colonised society of Bahrain, thus representing the political and ideological side of Bahraini capitalist relations.

This ideological dimension of Bahraini social transformation, I maintain, was generated in the form of Al Khalifa regime's willed ideology, which was fed by British colonialism for the arbitrary and rationalistic purpose of organising and mobilising individuals under certain sociopolitical orders.⁷¹ Its validity and concreteness were substantiated through what Omar AlShehabi calls 'a colonial ethnosectarian gaze' and then appropriated by 'contested divided rule'.⁷² The colonial lens, as AlShehabi suggests, first appeared in a British semi-official census, entitled *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman and Central Arabia*, conducted by John Gordon Lorimer between 1903 and 1915. It later offered British political agents in Bahrain a knowledge toolkit

⁶⁸ Shilliam maintains that historical materialists conventionally tend to 'contextualize knowledge production within socio-economic relations, specifically, class conflict', and then 'seeks to de-naturalize ruling ideas by contextualizing them from the perspective of the subaltern's position in the relations of production'. As such, some existing investigations situate 'the dialectical interplay of class struggle within one historical society' but not address the international dimension of the process of knowledge production. See Robbie Shilliam, *German Thought and International Relations: The Rise and Fall of a Liberal Project* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 12–13.

⁶⁹ Emphasis in origin. Shilliam, 18.

⁷⁰ Shilliam, 18.

⁷¹ Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 377.

⁷² AlShehabi, 'Contested Modernity: Divided Rule and the Birth of Sectarianism, Nationalism, and Absolutism in Bahrain'.

for colonial rule on the basis of the demarcations of ethnic and religious sectarian groups. As AlShehabi further argues, it was,

...a systemic approach that saw ethnic-sectarian cleavages as the underlying epistemic fault lines that determine political power, practice, and discourse ... [Under its shadow,] other socio-economic-political factors such as class, geography, profession, etc., although still playing a role, would take a backseat to these 'primordial' elements in shaping the contours of the local political map from the British viewpoint.⁷³

This knowledge system served as instruction in British colonial rule. Also, it offered momentum in different trends of political mobilisation within Bahraini civil society and has more importantly taught Al Khalifa's tactics of divide and rule ever since.⁷⁴ Nonetheless, it does not mean that such a colonial lens and tactics demarcating along ethnic and religious sectarian lines remained identical and effective over time. The tactics inherited from the colonial approach, as will be shown in later chapters, were used in the 1970s by Al Khalifa in allying itself with religious groups in a counter-balance to the rise of the New Arab Left intellectuals. It functioned as a ruling strategy ensuring Al Khalifa's survival, as well as preventing the emergence of counter-hegemonic forces organised collectively among different social forces,⁷⁵ when an ad hoc alliance was organised between the People bloc and the Religious bloc in the 1973 parliamentary experiment, as will be shown in chapter 5. In other words, the tactics were not patrimonial but best understood as practices which articulated the political and social instances of Al Khalifa rule.

I argue that ever since the colonial lens was employed as a willed ideology of the ruling class, it contrasted with Arab nationalism in the Bahraini context and thereby distinguished Bahrain from other cases in the Middle East. In the cases of Egypt, Syria and Iraq after revolutions in the 1950s and 1960s, the willed ideologies used by those revolutionary military figures were not only infused with a repertoire of anti-imperialism, anti-Zionism and socialism but also linked organically to social and

⁷³ AlShehabi, 336.

⁷⁴ AlShehabi, 17 and 22.

⁷⁵ For the historical background of divide and rule employed by the Al Khalifa as a ruling strategy in Bahrain, see Kylie Moore-Gilbert, 'From Protected State to Protection Racket: Contextualising Divide and Rule in Bahrain', *Journal of Arabian Studies* 6, no. 2 (2016): 163–81.

political movements within civil society.⁷⁶ In a Gramscian sense, that was a way in which the dominant class sought consent from its subordinate classes and political support from the people in order to build up its hegemonic status. Arab nationalism was organised by a populist regime as a national-popular collective will, which was then reflected itself in foreign policies with more revolutionary orientation. Yet, in the Bahraini and probably other Gulf cases, Arab nationalism was rarely considered in the same way. When Bahraini capitalist formation was fully activated through the realisation of oil commodification and export, a mechanism of Bahrain combining with global capitalism was established through foreign oil companies linking to British colonial interests. It was a British colonialist monitored conduit through which Al Khalifa obtained foreign capital as the major material basis of its rule. Such a structure contradicted the oft-seen rationale of nationalism on the periphery that derived from civil society and upheld the idea of self-determination and liberation from colonialism. Instead, the existing structure corresponded to a superstructure that was shot through a colonial lens, in which Bahraini people were demarcated. At the same time, while contradictions were aggravating as a consequential cost of Bahraini early capitalist formation, new social relations were defined along with the emergence of new classes and the rise of various sociopolitical movements as a response from civil society, to which this chapter now turns to examine.

3.3.2 Labour activism and nationalism

As I argued in the first section of this chapter, the formation of Arab nationalism is best understood through a late-developing capitalist context and its linkage to international capitalism. Bassam Tibi is right to argue:

The history of Arab nationalism is a history of the interplay between the actors, be they writers, politicians or soldiers, and the social structures in which they were acting. Social theory should view societal change as based on such an interplay between the actions of man and structural changes.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Stein, 'Ideological Codependency and Regional Order: Iran, Syria, and the Axis of Refusal', 677.

⁷⁷ Bassam Tibi, *Arab Nationalism: Between Islam and the Nation-State* (Hampshire and London: Macmillan, 1997), 8.

The structural changes, conceived in a widely accepted understanding in IRME scholarship, refer to the cataclysm of the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 and the later collapse of the Ottoman Empire. These changes demarcated Arabia and Mashreq into different areas of imperial mandate, anchored a general imperial policy of dividing the Arab world and set a historical benchmark for the rise of Arab nationalist movements in the region.⁷⁸ More importantly, the changes paved the way for a new scheme for constructing international relations in the Arab World with the creation of a contemporary state system around the ideas of Westphalian sovereignty.⁷⁹

However, the emergence of Arab nationalism at a time of cataclysm corresponded with more than just being ‘an articulation related to the real setting of the modern international system... [and referred] to the nation-state as an organisation unit of this international system [of sovereignty]’.⁸⁰ The changing social structure underlying the early formation of Arab nationalism also registered a simultaneous capitalist competition and social formation in peripheral areas. As noted earlier, it saw a socio-economic transformation that brought about new emerging social groupings of labours, students and civil servants. In new forms of social networks, social relations changed qualitatively and quantitatively beyond established and localised religious and tribal bonds among the people.⁸¹ It then created a variety of social bases upon which social mobilisation relies and from which contemporary political ideologies derive. In Bahrain and more broadly the Gulf region, the driving forces behind the genesis of new types of social relations were certainly due to the commodification and export of oil.

While ‘the machinery of the world political economy’ substantiated the social bases of formation of Arab nationalism in Bahrain, it also infused labour activism into nationalist movements in the local beyond ethnosectarian lines. In the late 1920s, labour activism, related to a political agenda opposing colonial rule, began to get a foothold in Bahraini civil society through Arab migrants and those Bahraini students

⁷⁸ Al-Naqeeb, *Society and State in the Gulf and Arab Peninsula: A Different Perspective*, 68.

⁷⁹ Lawson, *Constructing International Relations in the Arab World*.

⁸⁰ Tibi, *Arab Nationalism: Between Islam and the Nation-State*, 11.

⁸¹ Khuri, ‘From Tribe to State in Bahrain’, 438–39.

who had studied abroad in Mashreq.⁸² The discovery of oil by the Bahraini Petroleum Company (BAPCO) in 1932 helped Bahrain to weather the Great Depression and relocated Bahrain in the world economy from reliance on the pearling industry to counting on oil. But its subsequent development generated momentum for labour movements throughout the 1930s and '40s. Accumulating grievances over poor working conditions resulted in a strike and a petition for improvements to labour rights in Bahrain in 1938. The strike, however, forced BAPCO to look for other sources of labour, from India and Iran. Those expatriate workers who would accept lower wages than local workers posed less of a political challenge to the authorities. The 1938 petition and another general strike in 1943 saw cross-sectarian cooperation in Bahrain that was believed to be a series of actions signalling to the authorities to pursue reforms including better education, judicial system, Bahrainisation in employment and the establishment of trade unions.⁸³ However, the conflict between the two sects during the celebration of 'Ashura in 1953 rather fortified the colonial practices of divide and rule by the Anglo-Bahraini ruling class'.⁸⁴

The sociopolitical dynamics in Bahrain in the 1920s were the first scene in other histories of Arab nationalism. The development of Arab nationalism in its early stages actually went hand in hand with a series of movements in civil society demanding labour rights, political reform and less colonial interference. While these demands were raised and proposed beyond sectarian lines, which had been demarcated and shot through a colonial lens as noted earlier, a national-popular collective will was also increasingly organised among Bahraini intellectuals, who were informed by Arab nationalist ideologies across the Arab world. They then carried forward this momentum to the next stage, calling for more political rights when the heyday of Arab nationalism arrived and swept the Arab world in the 1950s and '60s.

3.3.3 *The 1954 liberal nationalist movement*

In July 1952, the Free Officers Movement in Egypt toppled King Farouk and

⁸² John Chalcraft, 'Migration and Popular Protest in the Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf in the 1950s and 1960s', *International Labor and Working-Class History*, no. 79 (2011): 29.

⁸³ Falah Al-Mdairse, 'Shi'ism and Political Protest in Bahrain', *Digest of Middle East Studies* 11, no. 1 (2002): 23.

⁸⁴ Al-Mdairse, 24–25.

opened up a new era of Arab nationalism in the Middle East from the 1950s onwards. In the existing literature, this decade is usually taken as a turning point from which Arab nationalism as an ideological force unifying Arab peoples started to represent its substantial political connotations beyond the region. Pan Arab nationalism was spreading throughout the Arabic-speaking world, usually travelling on the back of Gamal Abdel Nasser's personal charisma and populist image. For those conservative Arab regimes and their external West allies, any popular movements in the Middle East during this period could be de-contextualized and seen as Nasserist plots, toppling conservative regimes and unifying Arab peoples against colonial boogeymen. One can easily find such accounts across IRME scholarship that allude to a binary understanding of Arab nationalism and modern sovereignty as two contradictory structural norms. However, as already shown, the ideological development of Arab nationalism actually links to societal contexts and changes, which have been unduly stressed in claims for a shift in international structural norms. Other histories of Arab nationalism, which was evolving along with popular and labour movements and calling for a more specific sociopolitical agenda beyond Arab unity, were usually overlooked.

It could be argued that the backdrop of Bahraini nationalist movements in the 1950s represented a historical trend of new *effendiyya*, which comprised newly formed social groupings of students, civil servants, teachers or urban bourgeoisie, professional middle classes and intelligentsia in sociological terms.⁸⁵ They were the major recipients of the ideas of Arab nationalism and those peripheric intellectuals who, in Nairn's words, were seen as 'taking things into [their] own hands' and contesting a concrete form of progress that 'had taken them by the throat'. Following the end of World War Two, with the commodification of oil in the international capitalist market and the decline in British imperial control of the colonies, both Al Khalifa tribal rule and the newly formed Bahraini middle classes increasingly grew in strength. Along with the process of modernisation, the former tried to have a tight grip of the private industrial and commercial sectors through the state apparatus, whereas the latter,

⁸⁵ For the term of *effendiyya* and its various implication, see Michael Eppel, 'Note About the Term Effendiyya in the History of the Middle East', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 41, no. 3 (2009): 535–39.

relying on trading enterprises, found such state intervention threatening to its growing business. Combined with the impact of the influx of South Asian labour on the job opportunities for local Bahraini, the sectarian accident conflict in 1953 and the strike by taxi drivers in August 1954,⁸⁶ Bahraini middle classes then led the first organised political movement beyond sectarian lines in the form of the Higher Executive Committee (HEC).

The political movement called for a series of reform projects, including the establishment of a legislative council, a judicial system and the creation of trade unions, among others. These demands delivered a message that the Bahraini people were supposed to be seen as political subjects ready to air their views under British colonial rule. As this proceeded, the movement encompassed a wider spectrum of social forces for political and labour representation through petitions and labour strikes, whereas the authorities kept practising tactics of divide and rule. Nonetheless, the HEC maintained its rather institutional approach to reform until the emergence of wider popular support for Egypt in the Tripartite Aggression in late 1956.⁸⁷ Though the movement was cracked down on and eventually dissolved, with the forced exile of three major figures to Saint Helena island, it substantiated political meaning within modern Bahraini nationalism and had a far-reaching impact on subsequent nationalist movements on the island, e.g. the radical leftward shift in clandestine movements and its close ties with labour movements.⁸⁸ More importantly, with the radical shift of clandestine movements towards a more outspoken anti-colonialism and anti-regime standpoint,⁸⁹ various Bahraini social forces were reorganised corresponding to broader regional and international socio-political dynamics that evolved with the development of Arab nationalism.

⁸⁶ Lawson, *Bahrain: The Modernization of Autocracy*, 45–61.

⁸⁷ Omar AlShehabi, 'Divide and Rule in Bahrain and the Elusive Pursuit for a United Front: The Experience of the Constitutive Committee and the 1972 Uprising', *Historical Materialism* 21, no. 1 (2013): 100–101.

⁸⁸ Al-Mdairse, 'Shi'ism and Political Protest in Bahrain', 26–27; AlShehabi, 'Divide and Rule in Bahrain and the Elusive Pursuit for a United Front: The Experience of the Constitutive Committee and the 1972 Uprising', 101–2.

⁸⁹ AlShehabi, 'Divide and Rule in Bahrain and the Elusive Pursuit for a United Front: The Experience of the Constitutive Committee and the 1972 Uprising', 103.

3.3.4 *The 1965 popular uprising*

The 1960s, as historian Abdel Razzaq Takriti argues, ‘witnessed a shift in the Arab community of revolution from empirical radicalism to radical rationalism, from an experiential epistemology to a theoretical one’.⁹⁰ The role of intellectuals in popular and nationalist movements was increasingly important for their infusion of different ideologies into Bahraini civil society. After the failure of the HEC and the first organised Bahraini nationalist movement in the 1950s, two major radical political trends emerged in Bahrain, and more broadly in the Gulf. One was the Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM), a regional Pan Arab nationalist movement. It was spreading across the Gulf through students returning to Bahrain from *Mashreq* and expanded rapidly especially with Nasser’s growing reputation after the 1956 war against Israel, Britain and France. The other one was the National Front of Liberation (NFL), a Bahraini communist movement established in 1955, influenced by the Tudeh Party in Iran and the Communist Party in Iraq, especially some Tudeh members who fled to Bahrain and became key figures in the NFL.⁹¹

These radical ideological turns beyond Bahrain in the Arab world and their influence on Arab nationalism received different scholarly interpretations. For example, Hisham Sharabi maintains that the radical ideological change in the Arab World in the 1960s was an intellectual ‘ideological rebellion’ against Western sociopolitical values. He saw it as being the result of three generations of Arab intellectual movements: the pre-World War One, inter-war and post-war generations. From the 1870s onwards, during which time European penetration became concrete, to the modern nation-state system coming after the demise of the Ottoman Empire, and then to the confrontation between the two camps in the Cold War era, the Arab world witnessed a comprehensive intellectual rejection of European ideas and values. This came from both traditional religious elites and ‘Westernised’ secular elites in the Arab world. In turn, it seemed to be that ‘the more firmly European ideas and institutions

⁹⁰ Takriti, *Monsoon Revolution: Republicans, Sultans, and Empires in Oman 1965-1976*, 91.

⁹¹ AlShehabi, ‘Divide and Rule in Bahrain and the Elusive Pursuit for a United Front: The Experience of the Constitutive Committee and the 1972 Uprising’, 104–5.

implanted themselves, the more hostile and negative the reaction to Europe became'.⁹² This 'ideological rebellion', as Sharabi terms it, originated from the *Bilad al-Sham* (Greater Syria) and *Maghreb* areas and then nurtured another more active revolutionary generation. In addition to Sharabi, Tareq Ismael saw such a radical turn as a response to the failure of the liberal nationalist movement, which was an inevitable development, for,

...neither the social forces that fostered liberal nationalism (the landed aristocracy and the prosperous commercial and industrial bourgeoisie) nor imported Western institutions were compatible with the social milieu and the new rising social forces. In consequence, liberal nationalist regimes collapsed in Syria, Egypt, and Jordan in 1949, 1952, and 1957 respectively. Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Tunisia, Libya, Algeria, and Iraq either never had the chance to experience liberalism at all or, despite all appearances, never indeed practiced it. The Sudan and Morocco vacillated between liberalism and oligarchy until both succumbed to authoritarian regimes, military and civilian, respectively. These developments, whether towards a military hegemony or towards a civilian oligarchy, constituted two different responses to the same challenge: namely, the rise of the new, more radical, social forces of the middle class. While the civilian oligarchies represented a self-defense measure on the part of the old traditional establishments against the new rising social forces, the military regimes, on the whole, were manifestation of the ascendance to power of some sectors of the middle class with their *radical* nationalism (in contrast to the outdated liberal nationalism).⁹³

Ismael, nonetheless, argues that the failure was due to the incompatibility between two philosophical traditions: the individual liberty inherent in Western Liberalism vs the collectiveness superior to the individual in Arab society. To Ismael, this also explains the radical turn to a totalitarian state 'as the representative of the society or nation [with] certain rights as against the individual'.⁹⁴

Beyond these rather idealist explanations, the radical ideological turn in Bahrain since 1965, however, offers an alternative account that reflects the social changes conceptualised by the concept of development, as noted earlier. It is best understood as a struggle between intellectuals, mainly having a middle-class background, and the ruling Anglo-Bahraini class, which derived from contradictions as a result of late-

⁹² Hisham Sharabi, 'The Transformation of Ideology in the Arab World', *Middle East Journal* 19, no. 4 (1965): 471–74.

⁹³ Ismael, *The Arab Left*, 11–12.

⁹⁴ Ismael, Tareq Y., *The Arab Left*, (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1976), pp. 14–17.

coming capitalist states. The struggle showed itself when an unexpected strike broke out in BAPCO in March 1965 and soon escalated to a country-wide uprising led by a collaboration between clandestine groups of the ANM (and some Ba'athist factions) and the NFL. These two shared the same goal of overthrowing British colonialism and the Al Khalifa regime. But, ideological and strategic divergences existed in terms of embracing either Arab nationalism with a regional focus or a comprehensive object of revolution beyond the Arab world. The ANM hoped to link the strike to broader regional ideas of Arab nationalism, whereas the NFL just concentrated on local labour movements. As a consequence, the collaboration did not last long and disintegrated into two major political currents. This disunity soon weakened the collective force of the movement and led to a brutal crackdown by the authorities throughout the 1960s.⁹⁵

Nonetheless, the March 1965 popular uprising was still a watershed for Arab nationalist movements in Bahrain. First, it gave rise to another wave of political exile from 1965 to 1975 during which some Bahraini exiles increasingly built their affiliations with other popular movements in the Middle East and beyond.⁹⁶ For example, Abd al-Rahman Al-Nu'aimi, fleeing Bahrain in 1968, later led the PFB with Abdulnabi Al-Ekry from Damascus; since his return to Bahrain in 2011, he became the Head of the National Democratic Action Society, also known as *Wa'ad* as the heir of the PFB, until 2007.⁹⁷ Second, the fallout of the March 1965 uprising, a series of labour and student movements up to June, showed that increasingly close connections between civil society and those clandestine political groups were being established. Third, a national collective will against colonialism and ineffective tribal rule was being organised and demonstrated through the ability of these political groups to mobilise a countrywide general strike and movement.⁹⁸ Furthermore, the 1965 popular

⁹⁵ AlShehabi, 'Divide and Rule in Bahrain and the Elusive Pursuit for a United Front: The Experience of the Constitutive Committee and the 1972 Uprising', 105–7.

⁹⁶ Lawson, *Bahrain: The Modernization of Autocracy*, 85; Claire Beaugrand, 'In and Out Moves of the Bahraini Opposition: How Years of Political Exile Led to the Opening of an International Front During the 2011 Crisis in Bahrain', in *Transit States: Labour, Migration and Citizenship in the Gulf*, ed. Abdullhadi Khalaf, Omar AlShehabi, and Adam Hanieh (London: Pluto Press, 2015), 200–202.

⁹⁷ Claire Beaugrand, 'Abd Al-Rahman Al-Nu'aimi: Forty Years of Bahraini Opposition', *OpenDemocracy*, 20 September 2011, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/claire-beaugrand/abd-al-rahman-al-nuaimi-forty-years-of-bahraini-opposition>.

⁹⁸ Abdullhadi Khalaf, 'Contentious Politics in Bahrain: From Ethnic to National and Vice Versa' (The Fourth Nordic Conference on Middle Easter Studies, Oslo, 1998), <https://org.uib.no/smi/pao/khalaf.html>.

uprising, as will be shown in later chapters, created a moment in the inception of Bahraini counter-hegemonic forces around Arab nationalism, the New Arab Left, which formed the major social forces having an impact on the following process of Bahraini state formation and then regional policy towards alignment in the independence phase.

Conclusion

The chapter has sought to examine the origins of Arab nationalism in Bahrain and Bahraini social formation under British colonialism. Through the lens of development applied to the inception of Bahraini capitalist formation, the present chapter has identified the legacy of the long British colonial era to the evolution of Arab nationalism in Bahrain. First, it was seen that contradictions as a result of Bahrain's uneven and combined development derived different social forces around Arab nationalism, among which newly-formed middle classes were the primary driving force. Such contradictions were represented in the political struggle, which was shown on the ideological level between the ruling class's will ideology informed by the British colonial approach and civil society's organic ideology in response to the cost of British colonialism and late-developing capitalist formation. The political struggle then became the first task that Al Khalifa tried to oversee in support of Bahrain's regional policy towards alignment after independence. Second, it was seen that intellectuals' critiques of Bahrain's political establishment had evolved from criticising British colonial rule to challenging Al Khalifa's tribal rule, especially since the 1960s. Along with this process, more political implications were attributed to the development of Arab nationalism in Bahrain. The idea of the people as a major political subject for sovereignty gradually formed among Bahraini intellectuals. It evolved to be the nucleus of Arab nationalist movements in Bahrain. While such an idea fundamentally challenged the ruling legitimacy of Al Khalifa, it also showed how Bahraini intellectuals were attempting to organise a national-popular collective will related to Arab nationalism in sociopolitical movements. As noted earlier, and as will be shown in the next chapter, this intellectual attempt took a revolutionary turn along

with the rise of the New Arab Left movement in the Middle East and then became the major counter-hegemonic force in Bahrain, and more broadly in the Gulf area.

I argue that these legacies can be further summarised as a representation of the ideological disconnection between Al Khalifa and Bahraini civil society. It differentiated Bahrain from other cases that had been through revolution, like Egypt, Syria and Iraq. Moreover, it gave a historical sociological meaning to the state of Bahrain, while this thesis analyses the interplay of Arab nationalism and Bahrain's regional policy in chapter 6. In a Gramscian sense, it registers a disconnection between the will ideology of the ruling class and the organic ideology of civil society. However, such a disconnection does not suggest dichotomous and static state-society relations but dynamic state-society equilibrium as this thesis proceeds. It was subject to national, regional and international socio-political dynamics and further related to how different social agents responded. More importantly, it substantiated the context in which the political struggle among different forces continued and revolved around the evolution of Arab nationalism, analysed in the following chapters.

4 IDEOLOGY AGAINST REVOLUTION: THE NEW ARAB LEFT AND FRACTURED COUNTER-HEGEMONY

This chapter elucidates a critical intellectual shift in the development of Arab nationalism since the 1960s and throughout the 1970s, from which New Arab Left intellectuals emerged as a new leadership in popular and Arab nationalist movements. Following the previous chapter on the social origins of Arab nationalism and popular movements in Bahrain under British colonialism, the purpose of the present chapter is to continue to apply Gramsci as the theoretical framework for a historical sociological investigation. By exploring the reconstructed concept of ideology introduced in chapter 2, this chapter focuses on how New Arab Left intellectuals in the Gulf established their leadership in popular movements and qualitatively changed the tenets of Arab nationalism that became new social forces. I argue that New Arab Left intellectuals formed counter-hegemonic forces in the political struggle around Bahrain's internal and external politics in the 1970s. Informed by Marxism-Leninism from the late 1960s, New Arab Left intellectuals infused a new revolutionary momentum into nationalist and popular movements in Bahrain under the pressure of geopolitical competition and capitalist formation after the British withdrawal. In contrast to the conventional Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM), they embraced a popular version of Arab nationalism. On the one hand, they adopted a popular approach by linking themselves to civil society through engagement in popular and labour movements in Bahrain. On the other hand, they saw these movements as counterparts of other anti-imperialist movements in the third world. Moreover, one of the tenets of popular Arab nationalism, to pursue the goal of the Bahraini people being the sovereign subjects, substantiated the political struggle in Bahrain. This revolutionary ideological shift in Arab nationalism allowed the New Arab Left to become counter-hegemonic intellectuals vis-à-vis the old cadres of the ANM as organic intellectuals were to the Al Khalifa regime after Bahrain attained formal independence in 1971. As chapters 5 and 6 will show, the intellectual division in Bahrain and the contestation of sovereign subjects in Bahrain then influenced the formation of a unified counter-hegemony among different social forces, how Al Khalifa resolved political struggles and the formulation of Bahrain's policy towards

regional alignment.

The other purpose of this chapter is to give alternative accounts to the statement about the political twilight of Arab nationalism after 1967, around which centres an IR constructivist explanation of the rise of sovereignty norms and regional order.¹ In examining the New Arab Left and its relation to nationalist and popular movements, I argue that the development of Arab nationalism and its impact on state regional policy, and thus alignment in the post-colonial phase, is quite complicated. In the 1970s, for the New Arab Left, Bahrain's formal independence brought neither 'utopia' nor freedom. In effect, the potential state geopolitical competition and capitalist formation aggravated both intellectual and materialistic contradictions in Bahrain, fuelling a new momentum in the struggles among different social forces, especially that between the people and the regime. The story of uneven and combined development in the Gulf, as Halliday once commented on, continued while 'the rulers of the oil-producing states ... were intent on gaining a more influential position *within* world capitalism; [and] the anti-imperialist movement wanted to destroy this system altogether'.² The New Arab Left encompassed the ideas of class struggle, militancy and international solidarity related to the revolution in Dhofar, South Yemen and even popular movements in the third world. A radical and popular version of Arab nationalism emerged as a new paradigm to substantiate the world view of New Arab Left intellectuals. From the mid-1970s, the New Arab Left faced a setback when Al Khalifa and other Gulf monarchies engaged in counterinsurgency and took action against to the Left. This action somehow demoralised the New Arab Left and popular Arab nationalist movements. Nonetheless, this overarching anti-imperialist agenda was active on the other shore of the Gulf, catalysing the Khomeinism of the Iranian revolution in 1979. It was later subsumed into Khomeinism and Shia political activism in Bahrain as well. However, the rise of Khomeinist movements in Bahrain, I argue, did not rejuvenate unified counter-hegemony among different social forces. Instead, it resulted in fractured counter-hegemonic forces of popular Arab nationalism with a fragile leadership of New Arab Left intellectuals.

¹ Barnett, *Dialogue in Arab Politics: Negotiation in Regional Order*; Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair*, 252–81.

² Emphasis in original, Fred Halliday, *Arabia Without Sultans* (London: Saqi Books, 2002), 17.

The present chapter expands on the statements of Fred Halliday, John Chalcraft and Sune Haugbolle, in that popular and counter-hegemonic movements and the revolutionary momentum of the New Arab Left did indeed play a role in forming contemporary politics in the Middle East;³ and it substantiates Gramsci's insights into ideology, intellectuals and counter-hegemony by examining the case of the New Arab Left and popular Arab nationalism. In doing so, I first historicise the context in which the New Arab Left derived from the ANM's self-reflection on historic backwardness, both intellectual and materialistic, in the 1960s. I outline the elements of this leftward ideological turn in the Middle East, including critiques of the bourgeois leadership of the ANM, the setback of the 1967 war and the necessity of engaging in class struggle. These elements delivered a utopian world view informed by Marxism-Leninism, as a substitute for the conventional ANM approach prior to the late 1960s. Second, I turn to the case of the New Arab Left movement in the Gulf, comprising: The People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) in Aden, the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arabian Gulf (PFLOAG) in Dhofar and, particularly, the Popular Front of Bahrain (PFB). This section examines in particular how the Bahraini New Arab Left attempted to take a leading role in popular Arab nationalist movements, but maintained ad hoc alliances with other communist and religious groups. Also, it outlines their manifesto and political agenda for how they understood some sociopolitical issues at the national, regional and international levels. The leadership of New Arab Left intellectuals in popular movements faced a predicament after the dissolution of parliament in 1975 and the subsequent rise of Khomeinist movements, along with the outbreak of the Iranian Revolution in the late 1970s. Therefore, I turn to a discussion on why unified counter-hegemonic forces around popular Arab nationalism were absent when another revolutionary moment came with the Iranian revolution.

³ Halliday, *Arabia Without Sultans*; Chalcraft, *Popular Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East*; Haugbolle, 'The New Arab Left and 1967'. For Haugbolle's part, he has presented a thorough analysis of the genealogy of the New Arab Left on its historical origins, intellectual influences in the context of so-called global New Left wave in late 1968, and even legacies.

4.1 Marking the Revolutionary Moment of Arab Nationalism

The leftward turn within the ANM in the 1960s was, by and large, the cornerstone of a paradigm shift. It rearticulated the relationship of ‘theory’ and ‘practice’ in Arab nationalism and opened up another possible path along which other ‘histories’ of Arab nationalism evolved following the leftist movements in Arabia and the Gulf.⁴ As an intellectual self-criticism on the failure and disillusionment of an unfulfilled project of Arab unity in previous decades, this turn gave rise to a new generation of Arab nationalists seeking to re-examine the ideological linkage between Arab nationalism and society in the Middle East. Being fuelled by the regional and international geopolitical earthquake, they further redefined the nature of international relations and attempted to maintain and intensify the revolutionary momentum. The intellectual transition was a sort of ‘dual revolution’,⁵ which self-revolutionised the existing paradigm within the ANM for a new historical bloc and created a counter-hegemony by learning from Marxism-Leninism. As Ali Qasim Rabia, a member of the Arab nationalist movement in Bahrain who was influenced by New Arab Left ideas and elected as a member of parliament in 1973, says: ‘[To us] even nationalists were also holding Marxist views, reading about Marxism, the literature of Marxism, about Marx, Engels and that sort of literature at that time. We enjoyed it very much because it was what we call ‘real transforming and thinking’.⁶ This was a critical turning point for Arab nationalism, giving birth to the so-called New Arab Left movement in the Middle East: a new generation of Arab nationalists emerged as counter-hegemonic intellectuals who decried ‘the historical backwardness’ of the Middle East, especially the Gulf, looking through a Marxist-Leninist lens.

⁴ A thorough survey of the Left organisation in Arabia and the Gulf, see Abdulnabi Al-Ekry, *Al Tantheemat Al-Yasariya Fi Al-Jazeera Wa Al-Khaleej Al-Arabi (The Left Organisations in the Peninsula and the Arab Gulf)* (Bahrain and Beirut: Faradees, 2014). On the New Arab Left, see particularly chapter 2.

⁵ In its original term, ‘dual revolution’ was coined by Eric Hobsbawm to analyse ‘the transformation of the world between 1789 and 1848’ in the fallout of ‘the French Revolution of 1789 and the contemporaneous British Industrial Revolution’. Here, my use of ‘dual revolution’ is to emphasise ‘revolution in theory and practice’ within the intellectual transition of the Arab nationalist movement. Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: Europe 1789-1848*, Abacus (London: Sphere, 1977), 11.

⁶ Interview with Ali Qasim Rabia, *Manama*, December 13, 2015.

4.1.1 *Fermenting leftward turns*

The first strike to the ANM was the dissolution of the Egyptian-Syrian coalition, in the form of the United Arab Republic (UAR), in September 1961, which was followed by polarised disintegration within the ANM. The dissolution of the UAR caused many to reflect, particularly among the left-wing cadres of the ANM, on the idea of unifying Arab lands into one Arab state through republicanism. Yet, such reflection did not lead to an immediate break between the left-wing of the ANM and Nasserists, whose leadership in the ANM was quite influential then. Until Nasser's rightward shift on the Yemeni issues after 1964 and his instrumentalisation of the left wing as an intelligence apparatus, some left-wing cadres of the ANM then separated from Nasserists at the end of 1966.⁷ Muhsin Ibrahim, one of the leading left-wing figures of the ANM in Lebanon, argued that national unity collided with the interests of landowners, capitalists and some in the bourgeoisie. While this collision was intertwined with the interests of the colonial powers, the ANM needed to reflect on its liberal heritage; nonetheless, he did not intend to negate and delegitimise the basic elements of the ANM but urged a break from its fascist elements and sought political solutions from below.⁸ This leftward current took a turn seeking radical political changes and became what historian Abdel Razzaq Takriti termed 'radical rationalism'.⁹ It was 'radical' due to its proposal for a popular armed struggle approach to pursue revolutionary fundamental sociopolitical changes. And it was 'rational' because its ideas drew on the philosophy of 'scientific socialism' in Marxism-Leninism, theoretically signposting the objectives and strategies for revolution. This intellectual enlightenment then sowed the seeds of a later wave of self-reflection and critiques in the ANM about the leadership and strategies of Arab nationalist movements.

The 6-year fermenting process for the leftward turn eventually ripened and became conspicuous after the setback (*Naksa*) of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and the

⁷ Fred Halliday, 'Revolutionary Transformation in the Arab World, Habash and His Comrades from Nationalism to Marxism (Book Review)', *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 6, no. 3 (1976): 355–56; Takriti, *Monsoon Revolution: Republicans, Sultans, and Empires in Oman 1965-1976*, 93.

⁸ Al-Kubaisi, 'The Arab Nationalist Movement 1951-1971: From Pressure Group to Socialist Party', 138–40.

⁹ Takriti, *Monsoon Revolution: Republicans, Sultans, and Empires in Oman 1965-1976*, 91.

tarnished reputation of Nasser.¹⁰ Some suggested a radical enlightenment, liberation from ‘religious obscurantism’, while others encompassed appeals from Islamic groups into their political programmes on the basis of national unity.¹¹ Although this leftward ideological turn in Arab nationalist movements was a rather materialist self-reflection, the divorce between Islam and Socialist ideas has never been emphasised, not least in the manifesto of New Arab Left intellectuals in the Gulf.¹² While it was encouraged by Guevarism, the Vietnam war and Communist China, its essence of a popular nationalist struggle corresponded to anti-imperialist movements in the third world. Soon after *Naksa*, a report called ‘The Arab Revolution in the Face of the Battle of Destiny’ was concluded at an ANM meeting in which George Habash, the founder of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), convened. This report denounced the petty bourgeois leadership of the ANM that distrusted popular movements.¹³ It was a manifesto that self-criticised and blamed the bourgeois ‘hegemony’ within the ANM that failed to establish a powerful historical bloc against imperialists.

The emergence of radical left-leaning nationalist movements, therefore, created new and different social forces. This process then brought about the disintegration of ANM following three trends. First, as Halliday observed, some ex-ANM members merged with local communist parties, as in South Yemen and Lebanon.¹⁴ Second, after *Naksa*, some ex-ANM members, for example in Bahrain, became disillusioned and withdrew their support for military regimes in the Middle East. They were received by the Al Khalifa regime as significant governmental bureaucrats and this facilitated a variety of state-led developmental projects in preparation for British withdrawal and Bahrain’s formal independence. More importantly, as will be shown in chapter 5, they

¹⁰ AlShehabi, ‘Divide and Rule in Bahrain and the Elusive Pursuit for a United Front: The Experience of the Constitutive Committee and the 1972 Uprising’, 107.

¹¹ Browsers, *Political Ideology in the Arab World*, 22–23.

¹² In an interview, as one of the cadres of the Gulf New Left movements once stated: ‘We have chosen to against imperialism and feudalism. If we take up the principle of scientific socialism it is to apply them exclusively on the economic and social level. We are Muslims and it would never occur to us to give up Islam’. See The Gulf Committee, ‘The Gulf Bulletin No.5: Eight Years of People’s War in Oman’, June 1973, 10, British Library.

¹³ Takriti, *Monsoon Revolution: Republicans, Sultans, and Empires in Oman 1965-1976*, 93–94.

¹⁴ Halliday, ‘Revolutionary Transformation in the Arab World, Habash and His Comrades from Nationalism to Marxism (Book Review)’, 356.

played a primary role that ideologically linked Al Khalifa and Bahraini society.¹⁵ Third, the crystallisation and empowerment of radical left-leaning nationalists in the form of popular fronts was seen across the Middle East, e.g. the PFLP and the PFLOAG. Among these trends, the third one had more influence on the ideological turn in popular movements across the Middle East. Its reformed but radicalised anti-imperialist agenda delivered a tone of popular revolution. While criticising the conventional ANM, this trend also attacked the Arab communist parties due to their rigid and non-resilient doctrines, which were isolated from real circumstances and obsessed with the Soviet model and leadership. It saw the communist parties as nothing but ‘the revolutionary progressive wing of the petty bourgeoisie’,¹⁶ and therefore turned these radical left-leaning nationalists into New Arab Left intellectuals who forged new counter-hegemonic forces among others.

4.1.2 *Critiques of hegemony*

Following the rise of the New Arab Left movement in the 1960s, critiques of the bourgeois leadership of the ANM gained currency in nationalist and popular movements in the Gulf. The grievances of the leadership, as Takriti argues, stemmed from two regional events in the 1960s. First, the existing leadership of the ANM failed to support the strikes and popular uprising in Bahrain in March 1965. This led to the announcement by some Bahraini nationalists, who later joined the PFLOAG, that Bahraini movements had not received enough attention from the Kuwaiti leadership.¹⁷ And the Kuwaiti ANM was only concerned with the west of the Arabian Peninsula, rather than the Gulf.¹⁸ Second, the ANM leadership did not side with the National Liberation Front of South Yemen when Nasser turned his back on it.¹⁹ These events, and *Naksa* in 1967, then re-oriented the revolutionary programme of the ANM in the Gulf. By declaring its separation from the ANM branch in Arabia, adopting Marxism-

¹⁵ Interview with Ali Fakhro, *Manama*, January 5, 2016.

¹⁶ Ismael, *The Arab Left*, 114–16.

¹⁷ Although Takriti does not specify which faction of the ANM that was not in support of the movements, it is believed that the silence of Ba’athists to the nationalist-communist demand for terminating the British rule compelled the dissatisfaction of the left-wing of the ANM in the Gulf. See Takriti, *Monsoon Revolution: Republicans, Sultans, and Empires in Oman 1965-1976*, 95.

¹⁸ AlShehabi, ‘Divide and Rule in Bahrain and the Elusive Pursuit for a United Front: The Experience of the Constitutive Committee and the 1972 Uprising’, 108.

¹⁹ Takriti, *Monsoon Revolution: Republicans, Sultans, and Empires in Oman 1965-1976*, 95.

Leninism as its primary ideology and taking on an armed-struggle approach to liberating Arabia, some nationalists reorganised as ‘The Popular Revolutionary Movement in Oman and the Arab Gulf’ (PRM) under the banner of the New Arab Left.²⁰

On the basis of self-criticism of the ANM and the adoption of Marxism-Leninism, the New Arab Left reconceptualised social relations in the Gulf. To them, an Arab bourgeois-feudalist-imperialist hegemony was seen as the major hegemonic social force behind the existing historical bloc. It should be held responsible for *Naksa* and the failure to unleash the imperialist fetters of the Arab states. As an overseas revolutionary voice in support of the New Arab Left movement in the Gulf²¹, the Gulf Committee issued a periodical called *the Gulf Bulletin* in the 1970s that denounced this hegemony and corresponded to the revolutionary agenda in the Gulf.²² For New Arab Left intellectuals, the British withdrawal in late 1971 did not actually bring substantial national independence to the Gulf Arab states. Instead, it was followed by the creation of Bahrain, Qatar and the Union of Arab Emirates as spurious independent states that preserved British interests.²³ This arrangement sharpened the contradictions in this region and turned the war in Oman into ‘Britain’s Vietnam, fought and run by Whitehall’ in London.²⁴

For New Arab Left intellectuals, popular revolutions in the Gulf were not merely

²⁰ AlShehabi, ‘Divide and Rule in Bahrain and the Elusive Pursuit for a United Front: The Experience of the Constitutive Committee and the 1972 Uprising’, 108.

²¹ For the New Arab Left and its ideological ties with the global New Left, see Haugbolle, ‘The New Arab Left and 1967’, 499–502.

²² During the high tide of the wave of New Left in Britain since 1960s and its later intellectual turn to support the Palestinian movements after 1967, the Gulf Committee was established by young Lebanese historian Fawwaz Traboulsi, Fred Halliday, Helen Lackner, Ken Whittingham, Nigel Disney and some overseas Middle East students in London, mainly in the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). The primary objective of the Gulf Committee in support of the Gulf revolutions was clearly stated in the first issue of its periodical publication, *the Gulf Bulletin*, on June 9, 1971, the sixth anniversary of Dhofari revolution: ‘to give maximum solidarity to liberation forces in the whole Gulf area, to expose the ‘withdrawal’ charade being played out by the Tory government, and to link the revolution in Dhofar with the struggles in Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and the rest of the Gulf’. See ‘The Gulf Bulletin No.1’ (The Gulf Committee, June 1971), 1; Fawwaz Traboulsi, *Sourat Al-Fata Bi Al-Ahmar: Ayam Fi Al-Salam Wa Al-Harb (A Portrait in Young Men in Red: Chronicles of Peace and War)* (London-Beirut: Riad El-Rayyes Books, 1997), 78–80, and interview with Helen Lackner, Durham, June 20, 2016.

²³ The Gulf Committee, ‘The Gulf Bulletin No.4’, 1972, 1, British Library.

²⁴ The Gulf Committee, ‘The Gulf Bulletin No.1’, 1.

extended decolonisation movements but, more broadly, a striking back to the consequences of the longstanding capitalist formation in the Gulf. The contradictions between the ruling class and the people would be much severer than in the 1960s, alongside a changing global capitalist market. 'When both imperialism and the revolution have adopted strategies that are markedly different from those of 1965', lamented the Gulf Committee in 1973, 'the clash takes a sharper and more extensive form than ever before'. The Gulf region, with its oil resources, became necessary to secure the overall demands of the global capitalist market, especially with an expected economic downturn in the US in the early 1980s. While there were financial outflows from advanced capitalist states to the Gulf region for the purchase of oil, another circle of the capitalist game was launched simultaneously. The 'oil money' soon became 'chips for the Gulf States' to make massive arms purchases from the West and to invest in the global capitalist market. For New Arab Left intellectuals, while this circle economically and politically empowered counter-insurgency, it nonetheless reaffirmed their solidarity agenda: 'the need for a joint struggle by Arab and Iranian workers'. Their call came with the confidence to launch a comprehensive and successful revolution in the Gulf that 'could seriously weaken the economies of the capitalist west' and 'be a powerful and dynamic ally for revolutionaries throughout the world'²⁵. In doing so, they thought that an armed class struggle with popular support was necessary.

4.1.3 The voice of popular revolution: class and armed struggle

While the Arab military bourgeois regime had proven to be a failure in the 1960s, critiques of Arab bourgeois-feudalist-imperialist hegemony came, unsurprisingly, with the adoption of an armed class struggle approach from New Arab Left intellectuals. And such an approach became a new ideological linkage between counter-hegemonic forces and civil society across the Gulf. This was a moment, to use a Gramscian term, when some attempted to rearticulate 'the political' and 'the social' instances in existing social relations and thereby 'the people' were interpellated by counter-hegemony.

As a group pursuing a popular armed struggle and the most influential revolutionary movement in the Gulf, the Dhofar Liberation Front (DLF) had been a

²⁵ The Gulf Committee, 'The Gulf Bulletin No.5: Eight Years of People's War in Oman', 1.

revolutionary vanguard against British colonialism and monarchical feudalism in the region since the mid-1960s. After the *Hamrin* Conference in September 1968, the DLF changed its name to the PFLAOG and claimed this was a stride forward on a Marxist-Leninist revolutionary path. This move registered as a cornerstone for New Arab Left intellectuals with regard to their ideologies and strategies against imperialists and their proxies in the Gulf. An ideological turn to ‘scientific socialism’ as a core tenet within Marxism-Leninism offered the Dhofari revolution a framework. It theoretically identified ‘revolution’ as a class struggle between the poor masses and the imperialists, bourgeoisie and feudalists. This turn appeared on the PFLOAG’s agenda for adopting revolutionary violence, coordinating the Dhofari struggle with the masses in other parts of the occupied Gulf and assaulting the tribalism within Gulf society.²⁶ As Takriti points out concerning ‘the battle for society’ in the PFLOAG Charter, which saw:

The tribal structure as a divisive presence in society retarding the anti-colonial battle. It was also a response to tribalism’s perceived nature as obstacle to the development of new economic and social relations. Amongst the revolutionary vanguard the nationalist impulse for the creation of a whole out of fragments—the patching of a society out of tribes—was present and so was the will for socialist modernization.²⁷

Takriti shows that the ideological development within the Dhofari revolution was a turning point in the Gulf popular movements, in that revolutions must continue beyond national independence in a political sense. This ideological turn denounced the conventional ANM agenda that disregarded the problems entrenched in the tribal structure and established economic and social arrangements designed by both tribal shaikhs and colonialists. Upholding a more explicit left-leaning revolutionary agenda, the Dhofari revolution committed itself ideologically and strategically to Marxism-Leninism at both the regional and international levels. In the Gulf, the PFLOAG continued its role of revolutionary vanguard by giving support to popular movements and recruiting cadres from the Gulf States, mainly Bahrain.²⁸ In the international arena, since 1969, it was encapsulated in a broader anti-imperialist movement in the world and given support from Chinese communists who further informed the PFLOAG about

²⁶ Takriti, *Monsoon Revolution: Republicans, Sultans, and Empires in Oman 1965-1976*, 108–11.

²⁷ Takriti, 117.

²⁸ Takriti, 123–24.

Maoism and criticism of the Soviet Union's revisionism. Nevertheless, the PFLOAG avoided jumping into the ideological conflict between Communist China and the Soviet Union, and it kept its efforts and focus on liberation movements in the Gulf.²⁹

The ideological development of the Dhofari revolution since the late 1960s portrayed several different characteristics of New Arab Left intellectuals in the Gulf from the past, having a far-reaching impact on the agenda of Bahraini nationalist and popular movements in various aspects. The commitment to a popular armed struggle approach to revolution showed pessimism towards established social relations. Non-violent methods could be useless and futile in the long run unless fundamental change was realised via violence. This violent approach did indeed encourage some offshoots of clandestine cells in the Gulf to adopt radical means, but it should not be exaggerated or simplified and applied completely to nationalist and popular movements across the Gulf, especially in the Bahraini case in the 1970s. Violent armed struggle was just one of the methods. Despite the large scale of labour movements in Bahrain in March 1972, sit-ins, demonstrations, strikes, and boycotts of parliamentary elections were more frequently seen in Bahrain. Even before the March movement in 1972, a petition for the establishment of unions, to deal with labour issues, was organised legally by the Constitutional Committee, it took on different methods from clandestine cells and brought Arab nationalists from various social ranks together.³⁰ The overall strategy of a popular armed class struggle is supposed to be best placed in a loose definition and in a broader picture of the New Arab Left's disappointment. It is much more sensible to hold the idea that revolutions should be achieved through an organic revolutionary body coordinated among counter-hegemonic intellectuals, progressive students, labourers and peasants in the Gulf.

To sum up, the rise of the New Arab Left signposted a new overarching paradigm for the nationalist and popular movements in the Gulf. 'Revolution', to the New Arab Left, 'meant revolution of society from the bottom up, occupation of public space as a means to social transformation, the creation of alternative life forms, cadres,

²⁹ Takriti, 128–31.

³⁰ AlShehabi, 'Divide and Rule in Bahrain and the Elusive Pursuit for a United Front: The Experience of the Constitutive Committee and the 1972 Uprising', 113–19.

communes and a general reinvigoration of political life by engagement at the local level’,³¹ Though it offered an overall strategic and ideological revolutionary manifesto, it did not impose an organisational hierarchy within the movements, among so-called revolutionary heartlands and peripheries, as did communist parties or the conventional ANM, which the New Arab Left movement avoided. This gave New Arab Left intellectuals in the Gulf some flexibility in their linkages to civil society, highlighting the people as the main political subject. As will be shown later, organisational flexibility was followed by different trajectories of intellectual development among South Yemen, Dhofar and Bahrain that corresponded to the political realities they faced.

4.2 Revolutionary Vanguard in Aden and Dhofar

Going beyond just revolutionary upheavals that might be taken as an anomaly in international relations in the Gulf, the rise of the New Arab Left in Arabia and the Gulf was argued as being revenge for the effects of uneven and combined capitalist development through colonialism, as Halliday once identified. Not only did it bring about an intellectual turning point in the evolution of Arab nationalism in the Gulf, it fused sociopolitical dynamics into the process of decolonisation and state formation in this area. Thus, this section and subsequent ones examine three cases of the New Arab Left in the Gulf – the PDRY in South Yemen, the PFLOAG in Dhofar and the PFB in Bahrain – in a transitional stage towards formal independence from British colonialism. I outline how the infusion of Marxism-Leninism and Arab nationalist movements was practised and represented in New Arab Left intellectuals’ understanding of sociopolitical relations across national, regional and international levels.

The purpose of this section is to substantiate the characteristics of the New Arab Left as a counter-hegemonic force. While critiquing the bourgeois leadership of the ANM and the dogmatic strategies of the communist party, New Arab Left intellectuals embraced a more autonomous and resilient approach to the struggle. This approach made it less hierarchical than the ANM, giving it more latitude to ally itself with different social forces and tie in to popular movements around Arab nationalism. But,

³¹ Haugbolle, ‘The New Arab Left and 1967’, 500.

in addition to continuing counter-insurgent suppression, the strong counter-hegemonic forces were difficult to unify on both the regional and national levels. As a result, when another revolutionary moment came with the emergence of Khomeinism in the late 1970s, popular Arab nationalism found it was a fractured counter-hegemony, relying upon a fragile leadership of New Arab Left intellectuals.

4.2.1 Short-lived revolutionary policy of PDRY

For both the tribal regimes that expected an extension of the British ‘informal empire’ into the 1970s and the revolutionaries who anticipated the realisation of utopia in the Gulf, nothing was more shocking and inspiring than the successful Marxist revolution in South Yemen and the establishment of the PDRY.

As a result of the sociopolitical contradictions stemming from British colonial occupation, the spread of Arab nationalism in the 1950s, the Yemeni civil war in the 1960s and the British withdrawal from Yemen, the PDRY was formed as an independent state in November 1967.³² It was the first and only Arab state that officially embraced Marxism, siding with anti-imperialist movements, supporting the New Arab Left movement and undermining Britain’s hegemony in the Gulf. On the one hand, when the British army was overwhelmed on the Dhofari battlefield, the genesis of a Marxist state like the PDRY in South Arabia threw Britain between two fires. The British objective was to extinguish the Marxist-Leninist revolution in Dhofar, but it could not be achieved unless the Marxist government led by the National Liberation Front in South Yemen was overthrown. On the other hand, the success of the PDRY became a potential gateway for an international Marxist revolution in the Gulf, and the PDRY’s commitment in support of the popular struggle was a catalyst for popular revolutions in the Gulf, especially for the PFLOAG.³³ Although reconciliation talks between the Yemeni Arab Republic (YAR) of North Yemen and the PDRY were embarked upon to discuss the possibility of unification after November 1971,³⁴ the National Liberation Front of the PDRY nonetheless continuously played a

³² Fred Halliday, *Revolution and Foreign Policy: The Case of South Yemen 1967-1987* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 8–9.

³³ ‘The Gulf Bulletin No.2’ (The Gulf Committee, October-November 1971), 2.

³⁴ The Gulf Committee, ‘The Gulf Bulletin No.4’, 2.

crucial role as a revolutionary vanguard in both the domestic and regional contexts.

As an exemplary revolutionary government, the PDRY put Marxist ideologies into practice via its internal and external policies, along with consolidation of the leadership of the National Liberation Front of South Yemen. In the fifth congress in March 1972, the PDRY announced a 'national democratic phase' that sought 'deepening of the political and organisational strength of the National Liberation Front itself'. In particular, it 'passed a housing law limiting each family to the possession of one dwelling each. All rents were lowered by 25%, all property in excess of the limit was to be confiscated without compensation, and all previously existing contracts between landlords and tenants were abolished'. Furthermore, the PDRY's foreign policy orientation showed its international solidarity with the third world, especially by giving 'political and material backing to the Palestinian and Eritrean guerrilla movements'. It also actively communicated with Cuba, North Korea, Communist China and the Soviet Union. In the regional context, in addition to its adamant support for the PFLOAG, the PDRY refused to recognise the formal independence of Bahrain, Qatar and UAE granted by Britain in 1971. It also rejected establishing official ties with Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman.³⁵ To end British colonial rule in the Gulf and pursue the independence of the Gulf Arab states had been common objectives for Arab nationalists in the Gulf. But, the wave of independence in 1971, for the PDRY, was somehow spurious and unfulfilled when the British colonial legacy was still politically and economically rooted in the Gulf.

However, the developments in regional politics in the 1970s had adverse effects on the PDRY's revolutionary approach. The PDRY's non-recognition policy was supported by its political campaign throughout the Middle East, intended to be carried out among members of the Arab League; yet it did not receive broader support in the region so that its revolutionary foreign policy was re-oriented in the early 1970s. Since 1972, and particularly since 1974, the PDRY held back from exporting Marxist revolution in the Gulf. It deviated from a revolutionary approach to a more pragmatic one. The PDRY reframed its policy towards newly independent Gulf Arab states, i.e.

³⁵ The Gulf Committee, 3.

Bahrain, Qatar and UAE, and expected the normalisation of diplomatic ties with its neighbours by abandoning its harsh critiques of their relations with Britain. This policy shift was due to the revival of geopolitical competition in the event of Iranian military intervention in the Dhofari revolution in 1973, which then posed a direct challenge to the PDRY's border.³⁶ One of the critical consequences, as Halliday argues, brought about by the shift in PDRY's policy following the Iranian intervention was the divorce of the Dhofari revolution from wider Gulf revolutionary movements, which used to be a common context for the New Arab Left in the Gulf.³⁷ At this point, the PDRY's 'inevitable' improvement in its relationship with the Gulf Arab monarchies confirmed the principles of 'non-interference' and 'non-aggression'.³⁸ Although Marxist-Leninist ideas still appeared to be widely received among New Arab Left intellectuals, unified counter-hegemonic forces around popular Arab nationalism were increasingly disintegrating across South Yemen, Dhofar and Bahrain at the regional level from the mid-1970s.

4.2.2 *PFLOAG's popular struggle and Marxist-Leninist ideas*

Other than the leading role of the PDRY as a form of sovereign state, the PFLOAG's commitment to popular and armed struggle was the most influential counter-hegemonic force and a representation of 'politics from below' in the Gulf since 1968. Its unequivocal Marxist-Leninist manifesto influenced Bahraini nationalist and popular movements throughout the 1970s. As a critical part of the international anti-imperial movement, the PFLOAG received international backing from Communist China in support of the Dhofari revolution. For the PFLOAG, while other Arab states were not interested in its struggle, Chinese communist support gave a timely material and ideological basis for popular movements in Dhofar.³⁹ From 9–19 June 1971, the third congress of the PFLOAG re-affirmed its revolutionary strategy and stance, proposing to implement Marxist-Leninist ideas after British withdrawal. In liberated areas in Dhofar, the PFLOAG affirmed the role of 'a mass revolutionary party to lead the revolution through all stages of development guided by the fundamental and

³⁶ Halliday, *Revolution and Foreign Policy: The Case of South Yemen 1967-1987*, 167–68.

³⁷ Halliday, 167.

³⁸ Halliday, 168.

³⁹ The Gulf Committee, 'The Gulf Bulletin No.5: Eight Years of People's War in Oman', 10.

scientific theory of ‘Marxist-Leninism’. Meanwhile, it was also crucial to unite nationalist groups in support of an extension of ‘the scope of the mass armed struggle’ and the increase in ‘the number of guns’. This popular armed struggle approach, however, needed concrete policies that crystallised social justice revealed in the course of revolution. Thus, the PFLOAG decided to form the People’s Council to administer and organise social and political affairs in liberated rural areas. Very much like the first steps taken by Marxist revolutions throughout history, the PFLOAG de-structured the established social relations by, first, abolishing ‘all the remnants of slave relations and the legal ban on ownership of one man by another fellow man’. And it then launched land reform by transferring ‘all lands in the liberated rural areas to the ownership of the people’.⁴⁰

In addition to the policies delivered in Dhofar, the PFLOAG demonstrated its commitment to international solidarity with its counterparts in other places. It was to reflect a broader regional and international context and to relate its project to anti-imperialist movements beyond Dhofari borders. The PFLOAG saw the PDRY as a ‘symbol of freedom’ and ‘the backbone of the escalating liberation revolution in the entire Gulf and Arabian Peninsula’. As such, the consolidation and development of ‘combative relations’ and ‘comradeship’ between the PDRY and other revolutionary groups in Arabia and the Gulf were critical. To prevent the liquidation of the revolution, the PFLOAG created a united revolutionary front among the cadres in the Gulf and Palestinian people under attack by imperialists and Zionists. This solidarity shown by the PFLOAG went beyond ethnic differences, while the PFLOAG affirmed its support for popular revolutionary movements in Asia, Africa and Latin America, especially in Vietnam and the peninsula of Indo-China⁴¹.

The PFLOAG related itself to anti-imperialist movements in the third world and located its revolution in the international context, and this process changed how the role of imperialists in existing capital relations and geopolitical competition was reconceptualised within popular Arab nationalism. The relationship between imperialist states and Arab nationalist movements was no longer within a British

⁴⁰ The Gulf Committee, ‘The Gulf Bulletin No.2’, 6.

⁴¹ The Gulf Committee, 6.

protectorate relationship like before. Now, it was evolving alongside both geopolitical competition in the global Cold War context and capitalist formation pursued by a new hegemony, the US. As such, the PFLOAG saw the role of the US as a new form of imperialism that was more influential than Britain. As the PFLOAG understood it, on the one hand, the ultimate aim of the US was to liquidate Marxist revolutions in Arabia and the Gulf by consolidating US ties to the newly independent Gulf monarchical regimes and prevent them entering the Soviet orbit. On the other hand, it was also to suppress the Palestinian resistance movement and 'pave the road for a peaceful solution', which was seen by the PFLOAG as 'a surrender to the Zionists and imperialists'. And the US security *pact*, as the PFLOAG termed it, was consolidated via US support for two regional states, i.e. Saudi Arabia and the Shah's Iran. Saudi Arabia gave backing to the Jordanian regime in favour of the Zionist influence against Palestinian resistance, and the Shah's Iran intervened in the Dhofari revolution and was given the privilege of occupying strategic spots in the Strait of Hormus as a reward⁴².

For the PFLOAG, the political struggle in the Gulf never just involved Arabs. It was the epitome of the Cold War and represented the struggle between hegemony and counter-hegemony across the world. In an interview, M. Ahmed Abdullah, spokesman and member of the executive committee of the central command of the PFLOAG, put it straightforwardly:

There have never been so many Baluchs, Indians and Pakistanis in the Omani army. All the higher officers, beginning with the Minister of Defence, the Commander of the Army and the Head of Intelligence are Englishmen ... The Americans are preparing to take over from the British in Sharjah and Bahrain, and they are already active through the mediation of Iran and Saudi Arabia. They supply them with weapons sold at the highest price, and in exchange receive new oil concessions at the cheapest price.⁴³

A grand revolutionary reflection on the geopolitical surroundings seen through a Marxist-Leninist lens was inherited by the successor of the PFLOAG, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman (PFLO), which carried on the Dhofari revolution until 1976. Moreover, it was shared with some left-leaning activists in Iran. In February 1975, the PFLO held a meeting with the left-wing Iranian revolutionary organisations,

⁴² The Gulf Committee, 'The Gulf Bulletin No.4', 6.

⁴³ The Gulf Committee, 'The Gulf Bulletin No.5: Eight Years of People's War in Oman', 10.

delivering the idea of Gulf solidarity and a joint front against imperialism. They denounced closer links between their homelands and the global capitalist market facilitated by the imperialist countries. The most noticeable agenda items revealed in their joint communiqué was their pledge to ‘continue the decisive struggle and to commit all the popular masses totally to the armed struggle’ on the one hand, and develop further ‘the nature of the strong, fraternal and historic relations linking the Iranian masses and their brothers the Arabs’ on the other hand.⁴⁴

The PFLOAG saw a schism into the PFLO and the PFB in June 1974. It was in light of that ‘the struggle was supposed to be brought to the local level’⁴⁵ and ‘each country should have its own party’.⁴⁶ Nonetheless, such a marriage of a Marxist-Leninist manifesto with Arab nationalist movements had already been prevalent among Arab nationalists in Bahrain. Yet, as noted earlier, the idea of ‘class and popular’ struggle around Arab nationalism should not be outweighed by its means of ‘violent and armed’ struggle. As Abdulnabi Al-Ekry, the representative of PFLOAG foreign relations and later member of the PFB exiled abroad, said: ‘[In] Bahrain, the branch [of the PFLOAG] there, took the name of the Popular Front in Bahrain, not liberation ... This is a new stage in the Left where it must be [about] these [movements] with local issues, and not considering armed struggle’⁴⁷. This is a reminder before taking a closer look at the case of New Arab Left intellectuals in Bahrain, to which the present chapter now turns.

4.3 Counter-Hegemonic Intellectuals in Bahrain: The Popular Front of Bahrain

As noted in previous sections, New Arab Left intellectuals distinguished themselves from the ANM and created new social forces for a more popular version of Arab nationalism. To them, the ideological infusion of Marxism-Leninism and Arab nationalism was mainly to give them intellectual guidelines through which they

⁴⁴ The Gulf Committee, ‘The Gulf Bulletin No.9: British and Iranian Troops out of Oman’, March 1975, 9, British Library.

⁴⁵ Interview with Abdulah Janahi, *Manama*, January 3, 2016.

⁴⁶ Interview with Radhi Al-Mosawi, *Manama*, December 12, 2015.

⁴⁷ Interview with Abdulnabi Al-Ekry, *Manama*, November 29, 2015.

rejuvenated the momentum of Arab nationalist movements by linking to the grassroots. In spite of sharing an overall anti-imperialist agenda with communist parties, New Arab Left intellectuals rejected any formal obedience to central command in Moscow, China or Iraq. They maintained their strategic resilience, seeking ad hoc alliances with other factions in ‘the Left’, and even with religious groups. While Bahraini cadres of the PFLOAG in the early 1970s, who later formed the PFB after 1974, attempted to establish a leadership role in Bahraini popular movements, they created new counter-hegemonic forces opposing Al Khalifa’s rule in the 1970s. To elucidate some tenets of popular Arab nationalism, this section shows how the PFB understood the historical backwardness in the Gulf, built up its leadership in popular movements and ties with Bahraini civil society. Also, more specifically, it outlines how the PFB saw the role of two major regional powers – Saudi Arabia and the Shah’s Iran – around the internal and external issues of Bahrain after formal independence.

4.3.1 Reading backwardness, charging hegemony

The 1967 *Naksa* was indeed a geopolitical strike at the ideological development of Arab nationalism and catalysed a new generation of Arab nationalist movements. The other important driving force behind the New Arab Left in the Gulf was their understanding of social and political development in Bahrain as part of historical backwardness in the Gulf. For New Arab Left intellectuals,

...in general the Gulf region was much behind the other Arab parts ... The Arabian Peninsula was the poorest at, let’s say, the onset of post-Second World War. It was the poorest part of the Arab World, the most backward. The oil changed fortunes but it was still behind in many things. Speaking about education, political life, so on and so on ... Society was backward. It was tribal, the economy was backward.⁴⁸

While reflection as such prevailed among New Arab Left intellectuals in the Gulf, they infused Marxism-Leninism into Arab nationalism so as to re-conceptualise international and regional sociopolitical relations in the Gulf. Even though the PFB divorced from the PFLOAG and put less emphasis on armed struggle and more on localised political groups, it still shared an overarching manifesto with its counterparts in Dhofar and popular movements in the third world.

⁴⁸ Interview with Abdulnabi Al-Ekry, *Manama*, November 29, 2015.

The PFB realised that they were dealing with a new form of US imperialism, which was different from British imperialism. In the past, relying on protectorate treaties as conduits, Britain used to implement a ‘closed door’ policy through which British Political Residents or Adviser had de facto political power to oversee Bahrain’s foreign relations and even meddle in domestic politics and the economy. But, US imperialism was present with an ‘open door policy’ through which it increased its influence on the allies and Bahrain related more to the world capitalist market. To the PFB, the US-Bahraini relations as such underlay the Al Khalifa’s industrial plans, like BAPCO and Aluminium Bahrain (ALBA), thus giving up more privileges to foreign capitalists. While some post-independence states demanded full control over oil production through nationalisation, Al Khalifa chose to follow the Saudi model, only asking for shares from foreign companies. This model preserved the privileges of some businessmen that had been the social bases of Al Khalifa’s rule and now became a crucial capitalist class along with post-colonial Bahraini social formation. Qualitatively, it involved these subaltern classes in a much closer association with the interests of imperialism and they evolved along with the commercial boom in Bahrain through increased volumes of international trade and finance.⁴⁹

I argue that this process underlay Bahraini social formation since the early 1970s and reconfigured different social forces around Arab nationalism. As will be shown in chapter 5, it formed a societal context from which the old cadres of the ANM and these merchants were co-opted as organic intellectuals to the Al Khalifa regime, whereas the New Arab Left turned to counter-hegemonic intellectuals, especially during the period of what I call ‘interrupted historical restoration’ in the 1970s. It could be argued that both currents of social forces ‘sought to increase the capacity’ of the state of Bahrain as a late-developing capitalist state, maintaining its ‘sovereignty, territorial integrity and strategic survival’, under state geopolitical and capitalist competition, while Arab nationalism ‘reinforced the momentum towards territorial consolidation’.⁵⁰ However, while the manifesto was calling for the people to be the major political subject of

⁴⁹ The People’s Front in Bahrain, ‘The Gulf Studies No.2: Bahrain, Service Boom and Class Struggle’, trans. The Gulf Committee, March 1977, 8–11, British Library.

⁵⁰ Benno Teschke and Hannes Lacher, ‘The Changing “Logics” of Capitalist Competition’, in *Marxism and World Politics: Contesting Global Capitalism* (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2010), 35.

sovereignty, New Arab Left intellectuals actually represented a more popular version of Arab nationalism. This was shown in the political struggle in Bahrain but also substantiated by how New Arab Left intellectuals created their leadership among different currents of counter-hegemonic forces.

4.3.2 *Establishing leadership in popular movements*⁵¹

What societal constituencies did the New Arab Left mobilise from within? And how did they pursue those ideas on the ground? To establish its leadership in popular movements and highlight the core tenets of popular Arab nationalism, the New Arab Left in Bahrain developed close ties with student and labour movements. As Abdullah Janahi, a member of the PFB and the National Union of Bahraini Students (NUBS), recalled, in the 1970s the NUBS was the nucleus through which the New Arab Left connected to civil society and spread its ideas across the Gulf. In addition to those who studied in Beirut and Damascus, the numbers of members and sympathisers of the NUBS were up to 750 in Kuwait and 500 in Egypt. There were 17 branches outside Bahrain, organised by Bahraini students. Not only were these students the major financial source for the PFB,⁵² also they approached and spread New Arab Left ideas among Bahraini people while offering educational, social and medical services to the society outside more developed areas. For example, some students set up a small medical clinic in *Muhharaq* and established some cells in the neighbourhoods around *Sitra*, *Diraz*, *Nuwaidrat* and other deprived areas outside *Manama*. Having such connections with Bahraini people through these channels, student members promoted the movement and worked on political education by offering books and PFB pamphlets in schools, women's organisations, university, college and sports clubs. Additionally, the PFB also developed some influence within Bahraini labour movements. In some major industries like BAPCO and ALBA, the PFB had strong ties with the working class and supported the establishment of a general labour union in Bahrain. These two groups of students and labourers were fundamental progressive forces upon which the

⁵¹ This section mainly relies on the interview with Abdullah Janahi in *Manama* on January 3, 2016.

⁵² Abdullah Janahi stressed that: 'This was the major difference between us and the Bahraini Communists, the National Liberation Front, who had financial supports from the Soviet Union until 1990, and between us and the Ba'athist whose funding was from Iraq. We gave 10 per cent of our monthly wage to the movement. We only relied on ourselves'.

New Arab Left's leadership in popular movements was founded and through which popular Arab nationalism was ideologically linked to civil society.

Despite sharing a common goal of struggling for popular political participation, the leadership of the PFB in popular movements was characterised by its differences from the communists and the NFL, and this was shown on a variety of political issues in the Middle East. On the Palestinian question, the PFB embraced the idea of full liberation of Palestinian lands from Israel and rejected recognising the state of Israel, whereas the NFL agreed to a two-state solution, siding with the Soviet Union. On some political issues in Africa in the 1970s, the PFB supported the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) in seeking Eritrean independence from Ethiopia, but rejected separation between Western Sahara and Morocco in support of the idea of Arab unity. In contrast, the NFL sided with the Provisional Military Government of Socialist Ethiopia against Eritrean independence under Soviet influence, but supported the separatist movement in Western Sahara. More importantly, on the issue of Arab unity, although the PFB saw an Arab union as the ultimate goal of the Arab nationalist movement, it only supported a political system that was founded upon the people's will rather than absolutism, whereas the NFL did not completely reject an absolutist government if it was supported by the Soviets.⁵³

As for how the PFB developed its popular support and approached these issues, what mainly constituted popular Arab nationalism as upheld by New Arab Left intellectuals was the idea that 'the people' should be the major political subject of any political arrangement. As will be shown in the following chapters, this idea underlay the counter-hegemonic forces of the New Arab Left in the political struggle against Al Khalifa and, further, had an impact on how Bahrain's regional policy towards alignment was formulated. The connections with students and labourers, as presented here, offered fundamental grassroots support for New Arab Left intellectuals, especially in a series of labour and popular movements in the early 1970s. Yet, their reach into less developed areas where Shia clerics had much more influence in local neighbourhoods seemed to face a challenge.

⁵³ Interview with Abdullah Janahi, *Manama*, January 3, 2016.

4.3.3 *Against pillars of hegemony: Saudi Arabia and the Shah's Iran*

While the US open-door policy resonated with a process of forming social relations in Bahrain, it also corresponded to the Gulf geopolitics surrounding Bahrain. To New Arab Left intellectuals, it was reflected in US strategic thinking on the Gulf. As the PFB argued in its first published text not in Arabic in 1976 and later issued by the Gulf Committee in 1977:

This policy which opened the door to more foreign monopolies and capital has been increasingly condoned by the local reactionary classes and particularly by the Bahraini ruling family who, for many years, have lived in the shadow of British rule ... [Al Khalifa] has since discovered that there is a place for it in the new order and that it can rely on US imperialism and US major allies in the area.⁵⁴

This open-door policy was substantiated by the Nixon doctrine of supporting US allies militarily rather than intervening directly in the 1970s. To New Arab Left intellectuals, while Saudi Arabia and the Shah's Iran became US proxies and reliable allies in the Gulf through the twin-pillar policy, the US then subjected this region to 'Vietnamisation in Arabia'.⁵⁵ Nonetheless, Bahrain and the Gulf were not identical cases to Vietnam, given the regional competition between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The Saudi regime was suspicious of Iran's territorial ambitions to annex Bahrain and to wipe out the Arabness of Bahrain. Therefore, ever since Britain left the Gulf, Saudi Arabia was keen to develop its economic ties with Bahrain through which it could exercise political pressure on Bahrain.⁵⁶ To the PFB, this was Bahrain's 'subservience to Saudi reaction' as shown in two fundamental issues. On the one hand, it was about the logistics of oil production. 'Kuwait took over all the shares of the Kuwait Oil company while Bahrain continued to watch her *Saudi sister* before making any move related to marketing or management.'⁵⁷ On the other hand, it was related to Bahrain's foreign policy. As the PFB added:

⁵⁴ The People's Front in Bahrain, 'The Gulf Studies No.2: Bahrain, Service Boom and Class Struggle', 7.

⁵⁵ The Gulf Committee, 'Arms Build Up in the Indian Ocean and the Gulf', March 1975, 7, Arab World Documentation Unit, Old Library, Exeter University.

⁵⁶ The People's Front in Bahrain, 'The Gulf Studies No.2: Bahrain, Service Boom and Class Struggle', 22.

⁵⁷ emphasis added, The People's Front in Bahrain, 23.

[The Al Khalifa regime] takes the same position as the Saudis both in relations with socialist countries with whom it refuses to exchange diplomatic representatives or to establish economic and trade agreements, and in its relations with the PDRY. A number of [Bahraini] officials have said they cannot take one step in this direction until they get the green light from Riyadh ... [Also, Al Khalifa] is seeking total harmonisation with the Saudi reactionary regime but it is not oblivious to Iranian influence. It is trying to benefit from the Saudi-Iranian contradiction to extract more wealth in return for further compromises of *national sovereignty*: signing military and economic agreements which give these two reactionary regimes greater opportunities to control Bahrain's *internal affairs*.⁵⁸

Saudi political influence on Bahrain's domestic and foreign policy through its economic ties with the Al Khalifa regime had a far-reaching impact on the struggles among different social forces in Bahrain. As will be presented in the following chapters, Saudi influence eventually led to the dissolution of the Bahraini parliamentary experiment in 1975. The Saudi regime's suspicion of popular political participation continuously impeded the revival of the Bahraini parliament throughout the second half of the 1970s. Having Saudi support, Al Khalifa chose to maintain an ideological disconnection between itself and civil society. This ideological disconnection was incapable of solving the struggles among different social forces, especially around the contestation of sovereignty. Having a non-integral state of Bahrain, in a Gramscian term, Al Khalifa faced the dilemma of having an open alignment with the US and had no choice but to give in to the Saudi leadership. This is what the PFB called 'Bahrain's subservience to Saudi Arabia' and was later substantiated in a more sultanistic version of Arab nationalism. While it was represented in a series of Bahraini foreign policy issues in the second half of the 1970s, it also posed a predicament to the ideological development of popular Arab nationalism.

Yet, in addition to Saudi influence, there was also an ideological shift in Bahraini popular movements, these also creating challenges to New Arab Left intellectuals in the late 1970s: the rise of Shia political movements that resonated with Khomeinism and the Iranian revolution, to which this chapter now turns.

⁵⁸ emphasis added, *The People's Front in Bahrain*, 22–23.

4.4 Revolution in Transition

The emergence of Shia political activism, like the New Arab Left in the Gulf, created another current of counter-hegemonic forces in the 1970s. Focusing on the connections among these movements and Khomeinism, most explanations might see Bahraini Shia political movements as a product of the Iranian revolution and a homogeneous group with shared sectarian identities. Yet, following Laurence Louër beyond an essentialist argument as such, I see Shia political activism as very like the New Arab Left movement whose emergence and impact are best understood in a more historical and sociological way, seeing such an ideological trend as being more heterogeneous while this trend was intertwined with the political structure and agents' practices. This heterogeneity pertains to the varying intellectual traditions within Shia communities, their dynamics within civil society, the internal split with regard to different political strategies and, more importantly, the societal constituencies these intellectuals were able to mobilise.

Rather than an in-depth historical investigation of how it arose, I prefer in this section to highlight its manifesto and role as alternative counter-hegemonic forces to the New Arab Left in Bahraini popular movements. The purpose of my discussion here is not to examine Shia political activism per se but to juxtapose its influence on popular Arab nationalism. I argue that the emergence of Shia political activism, which later corresponded to Khomeinism and the Iranian revolution, was a test of the leadership of New Arab Left intellectuals in popular movements concerning their ideological linkages to civil society. More importantly, while it represented a transitional stage in the revolution, it was also a test of the ideological development of Arab nationalism.

4.4.1 Awakening Shia political activism

An understanding of Shia political activism involves more than just ethnic and sectarian issues around the struggles between Shia populations and Sunni tribal regimes in the Gulf. Also, it should not be explained exclusively by either its domestic or regional dimensions. The origins and development of Shia political activism in the Gulf demonstrate some social, economic and political features. Beyond sectarian essentialist accounts, the inferior social status of the Shia community, due to

longstanding unequal distribution of oil wealth and institutional exclusion, is believed to be a catalyst for political sentiments.⁵⁹ These socio-economic and political issues offered Shia intellectuals grounds for political mobilisation in the Gulf that later coincided with the breakout of the Iranian revolution. However, the rising Shia political movements were not just a product of the Iranian revolution or a homogeneous movement. Although the Iranian revolution was a milestone for Shia political movements in the region as a way of radicalising their ideologies, it might be an exaggeration to argue that awakening Shia political activism could merely be attributed to the external influence of Iran, or that the ideological affinities shared among Iranian and non-Iranian Shia in the Gulf triggered politicisation. Louër argues against an approach that sees Shia as natural advocates of Iran's hegemonic role in the Gulf due to 'quasi-organic bonds of solidarity' with Iran, and so the background of awakening Shia activism should go beyond an essentialist stance.⁶⁰

Just as New Arab Left intellectuals established their leadership in popular movements by spearheading a paradigmatic shift of Arab nationalism and encompassing Marxism-Leninism, Shia intellectuals also tried to link themselves ideologically with popular movements. It must be stressed here that the role of Shia intellectuals in Bahrain might not fit perfectly with Gramsci on ecclesiastics as traditional intellectuals in two ways. First, these intellectuals did function by linking themselves to civil society through Shia traditions, but they included different categories.⁶¹ Considering their relations with Al Khalifa, some of them were not 'bound to the landed aristocracy' through which they shared 'the exercise of feudal ownership of land' and 'state privileges connected with property'.⁶² Having no such economic and political privileges conceived in Gramsci's 'traditional intellectual'

⁵⁹ For the Shia opposition in Bahrain, see Louay Bahry, 'The Socioeconomic Foundations of the Shiite Opposition in Bahrain', *Mediterranean Quarterly* 11, no. 3 (2000): 129–43.

⁶⁰ Laurence Louër, 'The Rise and Fall of Revolutionary Utopias in the Gulf Monarchies', in *The Shi'a World and Iran*, ed. Sabrina Mervin (London: Saqi Books, 2010), 64.

⁶¹ Conventionally, there are three different categories: Jurists, having formal training in theology and law and then exercising the authority by their knowledge of religious law independently from the regime; Mullah, acquiring the professional skills of interpreting Shia traditions and history through rather personal experience and self-education; those who self-claimed as descent from the House of Ali but in modern time composed of different walks of life. See Khuri, *Tribe and State in Bahrain: The Transformation of Social and Political Authority in an Arab State*, 70–84.

⁶² Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 7.

terms, and exercising their role independent from the regime, Shia intellectuals in Bahrain rarely acted as intellectual articulators between the ruling regime and the people in less developed areas. On the ideological level, they maintained instead close links between Bahraini Shia communities and their counterparts in Iraq through religious networks linking the ‘centre and periphery’.⁶³

Thus, second, considering Gramsci’s traditional intellectuals who belong to a closed system of ideas and resistance to exotic ideas, not all Bahraini Shia intellectual and political movements were the same. The ideology of Shia political activism in Bahrain was affiliated to cross-boundary Shia religious networks, which had been built long before Bahrain’s formal independence. These ideologies across the Gulf, up to the 1970s, circulated through networks that were established and informed by two major currents: the *al-Da’wa* and *Shiraziyyin* movements, the former joining the 1973 Parliament and taking a legal approach to politics but the latter keeping a low profile until its radical turn to armed struggle in the second half of the 1970s.⁶⁴ Nonetheless, this centre-periphery intellectual linkage was not homogeneous, so the Iranian revolution did not have an identical impact across the Gulf. As Louër further adds,

the impact of the Islamic revolution on the Gulf monarchies varied according to the type of position these networks had established in the domestic political spaces ... [and] the *domestic political structures* were more important than Iranian efforts in shaping the various modalities of the Islamic revolution’s impact.⁶⁵

For the case of Bahrain, the significance of domestic political structures became apparent in the relationship between Shia intellectuals and Al Khalifa before 1979. As will be explained in detail in chapter 5, while Al Khalifa and other Gulf monarchies were shocked by the victory of the Bahraini Left as a form of the People’s Bloc in the 1973 Parliamentary, subtle changes came to the political connections among Shia intellectuals and Al Khalifa. As a ‘passive revolution’ was initiated through the parliamentary experiment, Al Khalifa attempted to co-opt the *al-Da’wa* current

⁶³ Laurence Louër, *Transnational Shia Politics: Religious and Political Networks in the Gulf* (London: Hurst, 2008), 67.

⁶⁴ Louër identifies the different intellectual trends between *al-Da’wa* and *Shiraziyyin* as two different political currents within the Gulf Shia political movements. She argues that the radicalised trend in late 1970s was following *Shiraziyyin* current. Louër, 156–61.

⁶⁵ emphasis added, Louër, 155.

represented in the Religious Bloc in Parliament against the Left, promising to legalise some religious ethics and shattering unified counter-hegemonic forces. Yet, it did not work out as Al Khalifa expected. The issues of the State Security Law and the US military's presence in *Juffair* brought the Religious and People Blocs together. Al Khalifa dissolved the Parliament in 1975. Furthermore, since Al Khalifa's promise to Shia intellectuals failed to be realised, some of them turned to radicalisation. The *Shiraziyyin* current, which was not present in Parliament like *al-Da'wa*, took a more radical approach to politics by calling for 'the struggle of Bahraini people'.⁶⁶ Under the leadership of Hadi al-Mudarrisi, who had been in touch with Khomeinist movements from the 1960s, the *Shiraziyyin* current gradually revolutionised even before the Iranian revolution. The fall of the Shah in 1979 was 'a release mechanism' for 'a new phase of political action: that of mass mobilisation'.⁶⁷ At this point, while most New Arab Left intellectuals were arrested or in exile, revolutionary rhetoric in popular movements was extolled by some religious hues in the second half of the 1970s. Shia political activism in Bahrain appeared to launch a new ideological turn by taking over the leadership of counter-hegemonic forces and spreading an alternative world view.

4.4.2 Bahraini Khomeinists: *The Islamic Front for Liberation of Bahrain*

Similar to the Marxist-Leninist revolutions in the Gulf between the late 1960s and the mid-1970s, the Iranian revolution in 1979 encouraged and inspired a new generation of Shia political activists: Khomeinists. As counter-hegemonic intellectuals like the New Arab Left, their objectives were also to overthrow the monarchical regime and break away from the superpowers' orbit. Looking at the Khomeinist manifesto, the Iranian revolution resembled, though was not identical, to that of the New Arab Left in regenerating the ideological dimension of revolution. But instead it emphasized the cultural dimension of revolution. This cultural approach to revolution, as a regional impulse in Gulf politics since late 1970s, profoundly indoctrinated the political agenda of a new generation of Shia political activists, polarised the intra-differences of Shia political activism and informed the political struggle in Bahrain via a perspective of a

⁶⁶ Louër, 157.

⁶⁷ Louër, 158.

cultural clash. More significantly, the Khomeinist political agenda had an impact on the relationship among different social forces of counter-hegemony, and thus the ideological development of Arab nationalism.

The core principle of Khomeinism was ‘neither West nor East’, neither liberalism nor communism, that Muslims’ political struggle against superpowers should be supported ideologically by and educated through Islam. As Ruhollah Khomeini addressed Muslim students from universities in Tehran on 26 April 1980, he believed that the meaning of cultural revolution relied on Islamic education, by which,

...our young people [need] to be truly independent and to perceive their own real needs instead of following the East or the West ...[As such,] to Islamize the universities means to make them autonomous, independent of the West and independent of the East, so that we have an independent country with an independent university system and an independent culture.⁶⁸

In contrast to the New Arab Left drawing on a materialist stance to carry on revolution, Khomeini appealed to ‘universal Islamism’ across sectarian differences. For him, it was interpreted by a clerical authority rather than the adoption of ‘syncretic ideology’, mingled with Marxism and Islam. In this regard, religious leadership was essential for the appreciation of ‘true Islam’ and the realisation of an Islamic world order.⁶⁹ As a successful revolutionary model in the world, Iran took responsibility for exporting its Islamic revolution, supporting the oppressed of the world against the superpowers.⁷⁰

The most striking Khomeinist group in Bahrain, as notorious as the PFLOAG for Al Khalifa, was the Islamic Front for Liberation of Bahrain (IFLB), which in December 1981 was accused by the Bahraini government of plotting a coup to overthrow Al Khalifa.⁷¹ The IFLB was established in January 1976 and published a statement in October 1979 that laid out its concrete agenda. While upholding the banner of the Khomeinist revolution, it shared some features of the New Arab Left for

⁶⁸ Ruhollah Khomeini, *Islam and Revolution: Writing and Declarations of Imam Khomeini*, trans. Hamid Algar (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1981), 297–98.

⁶⁹ Khomeini, 292.

⁷⁰ R.K. Ramazani, ‘Khumayni’s Islamic in Iran’s Foreign Policy’, in *Islam in Foreign Policy*, ed. Adeed Dawisha (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 16–19.

⁷¹ ‘Terror Plots Arms Found’, *Gulf Mirror Weekly*, 19 December 1981, sec. No.567, Exeter University, Arab World Documentation Unit.

an armed-struggle approach before 1974. On domestic political issues, the IFLB maintained a popular revolutionary approach to overthrowing Al Khalifa, fundamentally opposing the option of a parliamentary reform after the Parliament was dissolved in 1975.⁷² However, its rejection of parliamentary restoration was somehow contradictory to some New Arab Left intellectuals in the late 1970s. On regional and international issues, the IFLB adopted some revolutionary terminology in framing their agenda towards Bahrain's external relations; and like the PFLOAG in the early 1970s, they took any scheme for the unification of Gulf monarchies as a puppet of the colonial powers. As a result, they rejected the idea of the GCC in 1981, whereas the New Arab Left eventually accepted it as 'the onset of Arab Unity', but on condition of having more popular political participation.⁷³

Although the IFLB had certain ideological affinities with the New Arab Left, its allegiance to Khomeinism informed a distinctive doctrine of revolution. It upheld Khomeini as the leader and supported the liberation of Palestine in the name of Islam. As the IFLB's clandestine publication *Kifah Sha'b al-Bahrain* (the Struggle of the Bahraini People) noted:

Islam is our doctrine. Islam overthrew the Shahansha empire and the Shah – policeman of the Gulf – himself whose military arsenal was made of some of the most modern American and Israeli weapons available ... Imam Khomeini is the leader and axis around which our oppressed peoples should rally if they truly seek freedom, since Imam Khomeini is the summit of jihad and faith and the symbol of challenge and endurance. He is the hope of all the oppressed in the world ... the way to liberate Jerusalem should be neither eastern nor western. A word of advice to those who seek Jerusalem's and others' freedom: rid yourself of any dependence on the criminal West and the disbelieving East and hold fast to the example of the Iranian people's slogan that embod[ies] independence.⁷⁴

IFLB's revolutionary agenda did not enjoy much support among Bahrainis, including some Shia communities, and failed again in another plot in December 1987.⁷⁵ Nonetheless, its allegiance to Khomeini's authority and a cultural-clash approach had

⁷² Al-Mdairse, 'Shi'ism and Political Protest in Bahrain', 32.

⁷³ Interview with Abdullah Janahi, *Manama*, January 3, 2016

⁷⁴ Quote in Hasan Tariq Alhasan, 'The Role of Iran in the Failed Coup of 1981: The IFLB in Bahrain', *Middle East Journal* 65, no. 4 (2011): 607–8.

⁷⁵ Joseph Kostiner and Uzi Rabi, 'The Shi'is in Bahrain: Class and Religious Protest', in *Minorities and the State in the Arab World*, ed. Ofra Bengio and Gabriel Ben-Dor (Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 1999), 177.

an impact on the momentum of counter-hegemonic forces around popular Arab nationalism.

For Khomeinists, the manifesto revolved around the idea of universal Islamism and Islamic government, *velayat-e faqih*, which offered the foremost ideological foundations and panacea to the oppressed. At first glance, the Khomeinist anti-Marxism stance was cradled in a type of discourse on a cultural clash between Islam and non-Islam. If the New Arab Left's struggle and political agenda of challenging capitalist relations was materialistic, Khomeinism was more like an idealist and cultural approach to anti-imperialism. However, the adaptability of Khomeinism was evident in its borrowing of revolutionary rhetoric from non-Shia traditions. As Ervand Abrahamian notes, '[Khomeini] transformed Shiism from a conservative quietist faith into a militant political ideology that challenged both the imperial powers and the country's upper class', and thus Khomeinism shared more commonalities with the populist movements in the third world than did Shiism.⁷⁶ I argue that while Khomeinist revolutionary rhetoric alluded to a broader sense of a popular approach, it did not essentially delegitimise the Marxist-Leninist rationale of revolution. To a certain extent, the Khomeinist approach to revolution was much like the New Arab Left in how both criticised the authority of Moscow's version of Marxism, illuminating the role of popular movements and attempting to raise counter-hegemonic forces between the two camps in the Cold War context.

If both the Khomeinist movement and the New Arab Left were on the same revolutionary front as counter-hegemonic forces under the banner of anti-imperialism, why was there no such unified counter-hegemony after the Iranian revolution? Why was the legacy of popular revolutions prior to 1976, the year of a great setback for the New Arab Left in the Gulf along with the end of the Dhofari revolution, not carried on to organise a national-popular will among these social forces when another revolutionary moment came? These are the questions that lead the present chapter to the following discussion on what I call 'fractured counter-hegemonic forces' of popular Arab nationalism.

⁷⁶ Ervand Abrahamian, *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1993), 3 and 37–38.

4.4.3 *Fractured counter-hegemonic forces*

As noted earlier, New Arab Left intellectuals in Bahrain became independent from the PFLOAG and formed the PFB, which abandoned an armed-struggle approach after 1974. Yet, pursuing the objective of the Bahraini people as a major sovereign subject remained a core agenda of popular Arab nationalism. On the ideological level, the New Arab Left counted on popular Arab nationalism to organise a national-popular collective will in contrast to Al Khalifa's willed ideology on the basis of ethnosectarian demarcation. Moreover, it supported popular movements against the Al Khalifa regime and its backing of external powers in general. Therefore, when the Iranian revolution broke out, most New Arab Left intellectuals saw the revolution as the result of a popular struggle against US imperialism and the Shah. To New Arab Left intellectuals, this was another revolutionary movement at which point unified counter-hegemonic forces could have been formed and rejuvenated. 'We stood with religious groups in the demonstration and distributed pamphlets in the neighbourhood,' said Abdullah Janafi who did not finish last year of university education in Kuwait as his passport was taken away by the Bahraini government in 1977. He then remained in Bahrain, carrying on in the New Arab Left movement and witnessing a cross-ideological demonstration in 1979. However, subsequent political developments nonetheless shaped the ambiguous relationship between the PFB and Shia intellectuals, having an impact on popular Arab nationalist movements.

I argue that unified counter-hegemonic forces around popular Arab nationalism actually failed to form when the revolutionary moment came in 1979. This failure can be explained by the contradictions between New Arab Left intellectuals and other social forces, which had a weak leadership of New Arab Left intellectuals in the movement, especially after the dissolution of parliament in 1975. The PFB faced difficulties in forming a strong alliance with different social forces, particularly with Shia clerics. Basil Rouf Al-Kubaisi once pointed out in 1971 the reason why the New Arab Left ideological turn as a remedy for Arab nationalism might fail:

For one thing it is necessary to have a 'political class' in the Gramscian sense of the term to provide it with the vehicle that [will] attain its ends. Owing to the nature of agricultural production in the Arab World, the peasants remain, in their majority, [an] inert mass. The working class ... still lacks the necessary degree

of organization. It goes without saying that the ANM offshoot groups are facing a real dilemma. On [the] one hand, they see no hope but in the mobilization of the masses to carry on the struggle to achieve the national objectives. On the other hand, they lack the organizational tools to do the job ... If the petty bourgeoisie can be integrated in... national liberation movements, then they can provide new vistas for th[os]e movements by supplying the cadres and the organizational devices for the mobilization of the less conscious working classes.⁷⁷

Al-Kubaisi's prediction is insightful for the retreat of the New Arab Left in the Middle East in general. But it needs more elaboration to apply specifically to the case of Bahrain whereby the PFB reflected on the contradictions within counter-hegemonic forces around popular Arab nationalism. As the PFB noted in March 1976:

Nothing noteworthy took place after [August 1975]. Things returned to their old patterns as a result of mistaken practice and... a subjectivism arising from considering joint work as a tactic not a strategy. Various elements of the opposition were ready to destroy what had been achieved by unity, to... [erect] barriers and to take unilateral positions without consideration for the national interest as a whole. They thought that nationalist work... [could] be carried out by one faction on its own ... [T]he opposition must respect the wishes of the people and constantly adhere to the mass revolutionary line. The nationalist movement is not required to be a substitution for the workers and mass movements; but it must be the vanguard of this movement, must lead its struggle and educate and organise it so that it can launch more struggles against the regime ... It is the people who make history. Thus, it is a grave mistake for any nationalist unit to form organisations on its own and present them as representative of the working class without the participation of... active and trustworthy elements of the masses in their region and without consulting the nationalist movement as a whole.⁷⁸

What the PFB's statement mainly criticised was the religious currents led by some clerics who had comprehensive influence over both peasants and the petty bourgeoisie. As such, while New Arab Left intellectuals were suppressed by Al Khalifa after 1975, the emergence of Shia political activism and later Khomeinism infused a new momentum into anti-imperialism as an alternative ideology to popular movements in Bahrain. It 'stroved for Islam as a revolutionary political ideology and as a social and political project', which enabled a wider mobilization among different social ranks

⁷⁷ Al-Kubaisi, 'The Arab Nationalist Movement 1951-1971: From Pressure Group to Socialist Party', 150-51.

⁷⁸ Kostiner and Rabi, 'The Shi'is in Bahrain: Class and Religious Protest', 30.

from the urban middle classes to students.⁷⁹ During the Iranian revolution, this intellectual development of adapting miscellaneous ideologies in line with a religious form of anti-imperialist agenda appeared to be a successful Islamic revolutionary paradigm. It attracted some intellectual attention across the Middle East, and trusted intellectual movements encompassing Islamist and Leftist ideologies as the ‘Islamic Left’ from the early 1980s. Its aim was to integrate ideologically some legacies of Nasserism and Islam, interpellate revolutionary religious consciousness as a substitute for class consciousness and thus build ‘authentic’ collectiveness among Muslims; furthermore, it stood ‘in contrast to the imported political and cultural ideas of Western intellectuals and ideologies’, and enabled Muslims to confront ‘modern conditions of inequality, poverty, underdevelopment, domination, Westernization, and alienation’.⁸⁰ Compared to the New Arab Left in the 1970s, a relativist version of the Khomeinist revolutionary paradigm was represented in a cultural clash between Westernisation and Islamisation. For Khomeinists and their sympathisers, the world view of universal Islamism appeared to be an alternative solution to popular movements between both Western liberalism and Eastern communism.

The contradictions between the PFB and some Shia intellectuals, particularly those shifting towards a more revolutionary approach following Khomeinism, were further aggravated alongside the fallout of the Iranian revolution. The revolution would have been a critical moment to re-organise unified counter-hegemonic forces against Al Khalifa. However, Khomeinism and its idea of *velayat-e faqih* and exporting revolution contradicted the idea of people being the major political subject for sovereignty that was embraced by New Arab Left intellectuals. As Ali Qasim Rabia commented on the Iranian revolution,

...we only supported the revolution itself. But when they started talking about exporting this revolution to the Gulf area, nobody favoured that ... As a value, [we were] totally against their ideas, their system.⁸¹

The contestation of sovereignty made the creation of unified counter-hegemonic forces

⁷⁹ M. P. Aminah and S. N. Eisenstadt, ‘The Iranian Revolution: The Multiple Contexts of the Iranian Revolution’, *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology* 6, no. 1 (2007): 144.

⁸⁰ Browers, *Political Ideology in the Arab World*, 27–29.

⁸¹ Interview with Ali Qasim Rabia, *Manama*, December 13, 2015.

difficult and the leadership of New Arab Left intellectuals fragile. Instead of taking advantage of the Iranian revolution and seeing it as an opportunity to rejuvenate popular Arab nationalist movements, the New Arab Left intellectuals eventually found that the revolutionary moment did not stand on their side. In contrast, as will be shown in later chapters, while the revolution turned to a more religious rhetoric and related to the revival interstate geopolitical competition in the Gulf, its interplay with Bahrain's internal sociopolitical dynamics then eventually created a favourable moment for Al Khalifa to deal with the political struggle in Bahrain and thus move Bahrain's regional policy towards alignment.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to illustrate the role of the New Arab Left movement by empirically extending Gramsci on ideology, intellectuals and counter-hegemony. It shows that while the New Arab Left heralded a critical ideological shift in Arab nationalism, it created a new generation of Arab nationalists as New Arab Left intellectuals and counter-hegemonic forces. Informed by a Marxist-Leninist world view, they reconceptualised the historical backwardness in the Gulf. By criticising the conventional ANM cadres as organic parts of a hegemony of tribal regimes and external powers, New Arab Left intellectuals became counter-hegemonic intellectuals and worked on building a leadership by harnessing difference social forces against established sociopolitical relations. In the case of Bahrain, we found that New Arab Left intellectuals attempted to forge their ideological ties with civil society and thus to establish their leadership in popular movements. While the movements pursued a core agenda of the people as the major political subject of sovereignty, New Arab Left intellectuals also manifested a popular version of Arab nationalism. Not only did it characterise itself as a new social force for national unity from communist and religious groups, but it also infused a new momentum into the political struggle between Al Khalifa and Bahraini civil society throughout the 1970s.

However, the leadership of New Arab Left intellectuals in Bahrain faced difficulties from the point that counter-insurgent forces became effective at both the national and regional levels since 1975. Unified forces around popular Arab

nationalism, I argue, actually failed to form and faced a critical challenge when Shia political activism and then Khomeinism emerged as other forces to interpellate popular movements alongside the outbreak of the Iranian revolution. Despite standing on the same front against Al Khalifa and its allies and in support of the Iranian revolution, these different currents within counter-hegemonic forces contradicted each other on the subject of sovereignty, particularly Khomeinists versus others, including some Shia clerics and most of the nationalists. As a result, compared to the early 1970s, popular Arab nationalism came to be made up of fractured counter-hegemonic forces after 1975. The dynamics of popular Arab nationalism shown in this chapter corresponded constantly to the political struggles among different forces in Bahrain. More importantly, as chapter 6 will show, it had an impact on the evolution of Bahrain's policy toward regional alignment, especially from its secret alignment with the US to participation in the GCC in 1981.

5 STRUGGLE AND AL KHALIFA'S INTERRUPTED RESTORATION

The purpose of this chapter is to further apply Gramsci's insights, examining a historical process through which the political struggle between counter-hegemonic and hegemonic forces evolved and intertwined with the development of Arab nationalism and state formation in Bahrain. Following chapter 4 on the New Arab Left and popular Arab nationalism as counter-hegemony, the present chapter centres around the concept of passive revolution in Gramsci, elucidating how the Al Khalifa regime attempted to weather the revolutionary upheaval at the national and regional levels after Bahrain's formal independence. As such, an attempt was made in a process of top-down transformation. Al Khalifa, as the dominant class, partly subsumed the demands of its subordinate class and intervened in the struggles among different social forces. This process was taken on by Al Khalifa to preserve its social and political privileges in the crisis and to prevent political struggle having catastrophic consequences. If successful, it would have solved a potential crisis for the ruling class and achieved a historical restoration by which Al Khalifa could have linked itself ideologically with civil society through organic intellectuals, and thus a hegemonic state of Bahrain could have been established based on consent, rather than just coercion, in the post-colonial era.

This chapter therefore highlights a most illuminating case – the 1973 parliamentary experiment – for the concept of passive revolution, to which the discussion on development and ideology in the previous chapters relates as well. While I outline the genesis, evolution and outcome of the parliamentary experiment, a clear picture of the struggle between counter-hegemony and hegemony is also presented, especially different social forces of the Left (including New Arab Left intellectuals, communists, Ba'athists and other nationalist sympathisers), Shia intellectuals (clerics from two different currents and other political activists, Khomeinists in particular) and Al Khalifa (and its organic intellectuals of merchants and some old cadres of the ANM). This process shows more dynamic and multi-faceted state-society relations than some other accounts of Bahraini politics informed by rentierism and sectarianism, which allude to a Weberian binary understanding of state and society. In doing so, I

follow the insights of Adam Hanieh on class formation in the Gulf.¹ Building on his elaboration, I argue that the development of the 1973 Parliament extended the political struggle from the British protectorate era to the phase of Bahrain's formal independence. It then interrelated to the changes in state geopolitical competition and capitalist formation in the 1970s. This case shows that Al Khalifa did not have a high degree of autonomy in politics nor successfully seek political acquiescence from civil society. In fact, Al Khalifa intended to take the parliamentary experiment as a conduit through which popular consent could be obtained from the Bahraini people. Therefore, its ideological linkage to civil society could be established through some old cadres of the ANM and merchants, or even some Shia clerics at certain points, as organic intellectuals. However, the process of passive revolution, as will be shown later, did not proceed as Al Khalifa expected due to international pressure for capitalist formation. I argue that the dissolution of the Parliament in 1975 represented an unfulfilled passive revolution, which turned out to be what I call an interrupted historical restoration.

To outline this historical process of passive revolution and how the Al Khalifa regime attempted to implement hegemony alongside this process, this chapter begins with an examination of the historical conjuncture at which Bahrain obtained its formal independence from Britain in 1971. I argue that Bahrain's independence was seen as the onset of the subsequent process of passive revolution in 1973. Both counter-hegemonic and hegemonic forces were organised around a variety of issues, which were influenced by the Marxist-Leninist revolutions in Arabia, as noted in chapter 4, and, more broadly, a different scenario of possible regional arrangement. At this historical conjuncture, the political struggles among these forces pushed Al Khalifa along a path of passive revolution. Then, I investigate the genesis, development and consequences of passive revolution in Bahrain, as shown in two cases – the 1972 Constituent Assembly and the 1973 parliamentary experiment in particular. In the last section, I outline the historical outcomes of the failure of the parliamentary experiment. Moreover, I identify three corresponding characteristics of an incomplete hegemonic

¹ Adam Hanieh, *Capitalism and Class in the Gulf Arab States* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

state of Bahrain that set the conditions for the development of Arab nationalism around Bahrain's policy toward regional alignment, as will be shown in chapter 6, in the second half of the 1970s.

5.1 Historical Conjuncture for Independence

In existing understandings of the historical moment at which the Gulf Arab States obtained their formal independence in the early 1970s, the most common account sees it as a transition: it ended the upheaval of Pan-Arab nationalism in the previous two decades and began an era of regional tranquillity with confirmation of sovereignty norms shared among state actors. A regional consensus was then built upon whereby 'regional states accentuated the role of diplomacy and outlawed the use of massive military force. Legitimation and complementary norms were central to the consolidation of regional security.'² So, 'the norms and rudimentary institutions of the regional system in the 1970s were strong enough to balance the fragile regional society and keep a lid on utopian experiments'.³ However, I argue that this historical conjuncture was not tranquil when seen through state-society relations. In the case of Bahrain, it is best understood through identification of different social forces evolving around and struggling for the independence moment, when articulation of 'the political' and 'the social' instances changed qualitatively on the national and international scales, and between these two scales. Therefore, this section aims to identify the changes around such a historical conjuncture that set the stage for Al Khalifa's passive revolution in the early 1970s.

5.1.1 *British withdrawal and open door*

The first and most important factor relates to changes in the pattern of Bahrain's political and economic connections to 'the international'. This factor substantiated the historical and sociological meaning of Bahrain's formal independence and fuelled the evolutionary momentum of the political struggle in Bahrain. It is investigated through

² Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, *The International Politics of the Persian Gulf: A Cultural Genealogy* (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2006), 14.

³ Adib-Moghaddam, 16.

the dynamics of geopolitical competition and capitalist formation in the Gulf in the early 1970s, which helps to reveal the ‘national’ context ‘as a point of arrival within the international conditioning of capitalist expansion’.⁴

As shown in chapter 3, Gulf geopolitics before 1971 was preserved to a large extent by a series of treaties between the British informal empire and the Gulf shaikhdoms through which the empire protected its geopolitical and economic interests by intervening in local politics in the Gulf.⁵ However, when the US arrived, with its military supremacy, the geopolitical configuration of the Gulf changed, along with the introduction of the Nixon doctrine, which strengthened the ties between the US and its allies through military and financial aid instead of direct and comprehensive intervention. For the ultimate goal of preventing the spread of Soviet influence, geopolitical partnerships were as such backed up the US as a neo-liberal hegemony. It asserted ‘its hegemony through finance ... [and] entailed shifting the balance of power and interests within the bourgeoisie from production activities to institutions of finance capital’.⁶ Since the Nixon doctrine, the cooperative pattern between the West and oil was broken. It was then replaced by a rationale weighing the security of the oil supply with oil prices and thus giving necessary income to two of the US’s major allies – Saudi Arabia and the Shah’s Iran – as the twin-pillars in the region. The Gulf at this point turned to be what Halliday called the ‘Saudi Iranian condominium’.⁷ This rationale created an overarching structure through which these regional powers became more dependent on the international capitalist market and more responsible for their task of countering the Soviets.⁸

At first glance, the moment of Bahrain’s formal independence alongside the political economy changes does not seem to be a case of the advent of capitalist modernity and primitive accumulation in a strict sense. This might rule out some

⁴ Morton, ‘Waiting for Gramsci: State Formation, Passive Revolution and the International’, 615.

⁵ Onley, ‘Britain’s Informal Empire in the Gulf, 1820-1971’.

⁶ David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 62–63.

⁷ Fred Halliday, *Mercenaries: ‘Counter-Insurgency’ in the Gulf* (Nottingham: Spokesman, 1977), 29–30.

⁸ Tore T. Peterson, *Anglo-American Policy toward the Persian Gulf, 1978-1985: Power, Influence and Restraint* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2015), 8–9.

conditions for identifying it as the onset of a historical process of passive revolution as in Gramsci's investigation of the Italian *Risorgimento*, the Italian unification movement from 1815 to 1871. However, considering the struggle between counter-hegemonic forces of the New Arab Left and hegemonic ones of Al Khalifa and its allies, I argue that this independence moment can still be seen as the onset of a historical process of passive revolution because of two characteristics: crisis and molecular process. In addition to a new historical bloc interpellated by New Arab Left intellectuals, the international capitalist formation at this point faced its own *crisis* of over-accumulation, as noted by David Harvey. He sees the process of capital accumulation as molecular one, 'operating in space and time' and generating 'passive revolutions in the geographical pattering of capital accumulation', that achieved temporal and spatial stability in some regions through 'a certain degree of structured coherence to production, distribution, exchange, and consumption'.⁹ It was, as conceived by Gramsci, a molecular process in which 'restoration becomes the first policy whereby political struggles find sufficiently elastic frameworks to allow the bourgeoisie to gain power without dramatic upheavals'.¹⁰ And this was the major theme and context in which the historical and sociological meaning of Bahrain's independence revealed itself.

But how did this macro-scale of passive revolution relate to the national scale and social relations in Bahrain? In the case of Bahrain, this molecular process of passive revolution was appropriated by a critical process of class formation in the Gulf at this point, which was revealed by what Adam Hanieh calls accumulation of *Khaleeji* capital (Gulf capital).¹¹ This process substantiated the transformation of social relations in the Gulf from the 1970s and then fuelled the forces for creation of the GCC in 1981. The concept of *Khaleeji* capital denotes 'those capitalists whose accumulation is most thoroughly and consistently grounded in the internationalization of capital across the GCC space'¹². Indeed, the role of Al Khalifa and other ruling families in the Gulf was as crucial social agents behind the formation of *Khaleeji* capital and class.

⁹ Harvey, *The New Imperialism*, 101–2.

¹⁰ Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 115.

¹¹ Hanieh, *Capitalism and Class in the Gulf Arab States*.

¹² Hanieh, 2.

But it is also important to note the sociopolitical bases constituted by ‘a network of powerful merchant families and colonial backing’, upon which the ruling families relied. ‘Many of these early merchant families, alongside new groups that emerged with the onset of oil, were the proto-class that came to underlay Gulf capitalism’. In consequence, ‘they form the social substratum that was transformed through a complex process of development in the subsequent oil era into contemporary *Khaleeji* Capital’.¹³ This process of accumulation of *Khaleeji* capital, I argue, became an advanced conduit through which Bahrain’s social relations were rearticulated to ‘the international’ along with Bahrain’s independence in a fundamental mechanism of combination. It also caused Bahrain to be subjected to more international and regional geopolitical competition and capitalist formation after the British withdrawal. More importantly, the new social substratum, affiliated to *Khaleeji* capital, then became organic intellectuals, which overlapped to a great extent with the group of the old cadres of the ANM, for Al Khalifa rule versus New Arab Left intellectuals who were on the counter-hegemonic side.

5.1.2 *Contentious independence and contested sovereignty*

In the revolutionary context expounded by Marxism-Leninism in the late 1960s in the Gulf, what followed Bahrain’s formal independence in August 1971 was not cheerful national unity. Not only did socio-political contradictions inside and outside Bahrain erupt, but also Bahrain’s independence was contentious considering its causes and consequences. Although the attainment of independence had been one of the objectives pursued by Bahraini nationalist and popular movements, Al Khalifa was reluctant to see Britain withdraw when the historical moment came. Until the British government relinquished its commitment to and involvement in Bahrain’s internal affairs, Al Khalifa appeared to have no choice but to accept.¹⁴ The divergent attitudes between the Al Khalifa regime and civil society had already made the issue of independence contentious in the first place, especially around the contestation on

¹³ Hanieh, 9.

¹⁴ As Alexander Stirling, the first British Ambassador to Bahrain in 1971, reported that ‘British troops are unlikely to be involved in internal security situations nor is the British military withdrawal likely to be affected’. See Foreign and Commonwealth Office, ‘FCO 8/1639 Political Situation in Bahrain’, 1971, British National Archives.

Bahrain's sovereign subject: who would be the main political subject to represent Bahrain? During the heyday of Marxist-Leninist revolutions in Arabia, such a contestation, therefore, pushed Al Khalifa to promise to undertake political reforms by drafting a proposal for the Constitution and popular political participation. As Abdulnabi al-Ekry recalls,

...several prominent [figures] at that time from Al Khalifa went to different parts of the country saying: 'We are confident you are sincere [about] your country, [about] Bahrain, [about] independence. We will fulfil all your aspirations. There will be democracy. There will be electricity everywhere. There will be housing everywhere. There will be education. All [the] things you dreamed of will be realised.'¹⁵

At that time, the nine-sheikdom scheme proposed by the British government and discussed among Gulf tribal regimes between 1969 and 1971 also faced a dilemma. To Al Khalifa, the progress towards an independent and democratic Bahrain seemed to be quite an acceptable option, rather than seeing revolution in *Manama*, or yielding exclusive socio-political privileges to an uncertain federal scheme, or turning Bahrain into a part of the Shah of Iran's territories. As conceived by Gramsci and in his observation of *Risorgimento*, the historical process of Bahrain's independence can be seen as occurring,

...as the reaction of the dominant classes to the sporadic and incoherent rebelliousness of the popular masses – a reaction consisting of 'restorations' that agree to some part of the popular demands and are therefore 'progressive restorations', or 'revolutions-restoration', or even 'passive revolution'.¹⁶

To a large extent, this process fulfilled the task of de-colonisation and formal independence in a political sense, which most Arab nationalists and even communists sought. More importantly, it prevented Bahrain's independence from being realised through Jacobin forces allying themselves with bourgeois and other subaltern classes. In other words, it was instead achieved by Al Khalifa.

However, this process appeared not to satisfy some New Arab Left intellectuals who maintained that progress towards Bahraini independence and national unity was

¹⁵ Interview with Abdulnabi Al-Ekry, *Manama*, November 29, 2015.

¹⁶ Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Joseph A. Buttigieg, vol. 3 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 252.

not yet fulfilled. In critical retrospective comments in 1977, the PFB argued that 'independence' did not completely solve 'the historic backwardness' of Bahrain as 'political and legal relations had not changed for years' while 'the productive forces in the country had developed economically, culturally and politically'. Along with independence, the new 'open door policy' was adopted and it 'forced the ruling forces to change their structures and form a partnership with their class allies in the executive and legislative, and extend their network of patronage'. As the PFB further argued,

...the emerg[ence] of ruling family trade and property interests [along] with those of major traders and contractors forced the ruling family to select ministers from big merchants and traditional families. They tried to use the nationalists of the fifties and sixties, by bringing them into the executive: they wanted to use their experience to reform the system from within...¹⁷

For the PFB, the struggle was not just against Al Khalifa rule itself but also against the established social relations, which were dominated by Al Khalifa and its domestic allies, the old cadres of the AMN and merchants, and supported by superpowers. Within the New Arab Left manifesto, critiques of the bourgeois leadership and elements continued their momentum throughout the 1970s. New Arab Left intellectuals kept on denouncing some right-wing Nasserists and Ba'athists who were co-opted by Al Khalifa, but in a euphemistic tone. These criticisms were applied to New Arab Left intellectuals who tried to avoid elitism in the conventional ANM and committed to popular approaches. As noted in the previous chapter, these elements featured the New Arab Left as opposed to the conventional ANM as counter-hegemonic intellectuals. These elements, furthermore, constituted the essential part of popular Arab nationalism, around the idea of the people as the major political subject of Bahrain's sovereignty, embraced by New Arab Left intellectuals. While a political objective as such was manifested, New Arab Left intellectuals also attempted to organise unified counter-hegemonic forces among different social forces. They forged their leadership through continuously engaging with popular and labour movements and sought to organise a national-popular collective will, informed by popular Arab nationalism.

¹⁷ The People's Front in Bahrain, 'The Gulf Studies No.2: Bahrain, Service Boom and Class Struggle', 25.

5.1.3 *Restless Labour movements*

In light of the idea of the people as the major political subject and the need for a complete constitutional reform after 1970, the New Arab Left further criticised the substantial meaning of independence. It was also substantiated by their attack on Al Khalifa's inability to manage issues including the rising cost of living and worsening working conditions. As shown in the previous chapter, since the late 1960s and early '70s, labour activists and clandestine leftist cells were brought together in a series of labour and popular movements calling for labour and political rights in Bahrain. When political societies were banned, organising popular and labour movements was a major form of cooperation among different social forces, also mobilising a mass rally.¹⁸ At this time, the first popular movement was organised not on the basis of either sectarian or ethnic groups: 'the Constitutive Committee for the General Federation of Workers, Craftsman and Tradesmen in Bahrain' (the Constitutive Committee).¹⁹ Resonating with popular approaches adopted widely across the third world at that time, the Constitutive Committee took a more bottom-up grassroots approach to the mobilisation of its members. Though having different strategies, the Constitutive Committee was on the same front as both the PFLOAG and the NFL, the two major leftist forces in Bahrain, aiming to improve working conditions and calling for labour rights in Bahrain with legal reference to the Bahrain Labour Ordinance in 1957. The Constitutive Committee did not see itself as a political movement in the first place or an illegal underground organisation like most cases in Bahrain; nevertheless, its composition represented some characteristics of an alliance among subordinate classes that eventually led to Al Khalifa's suppression through the security apparatus: the Special Branch, the secret service unit led by Ian Henderson, an experienced British intelligence agent dubbed by some Bahraini activists the 'Bahrain butcher',²⁰ and the

¹⁸ Marc Valeri, 'Contentious Politics in Bahrain: Opposition Cooperation between Regime Manipulation and Youth Radicalisation', in *The Dynamics of Opposition Cooperation in the Arab World: Contentious Politics in Times of Change*, ed. Hendrik Jan Kraetzschmar (London: Routledge, 2013), 135.

¹⁹ AlShehabi, 'Divide and Rule in Bahrain and the Elusive Pursuit for a United Front: The Experience of the Constitutive Committee and the 1972 Uprising', 94–95.

²⁰ AlShehabi, 115–19.

police unit led by Jim Bell.²¹

The political implications of labour movements concretized in 1972 during the campaign for the election of the Constituent Assembly and became increasingly influential throughout the sessions of the first Bahraini parliament between 1973 and 1975. In March 1972, a series of strikes broke out at Gulf Air, and these spread to *Salmaniya* hospital, Mina Sulman Port, BAPCO and ALBA.²² The strikes involved most of the workers from the major industries in Bahrain and students who held peaceful demonstrations to support the strikes. At first, the movement made demands for better working conditions, e.g. wage increases, free transport and reductions in the numbers of expatriate employees, e.g. Indians and Pakistanis.²³ It soon progressed to asking for more legalisation to allow setting up trade unions and constitutional reform that mapped out a clear political agenda. Compared to the politicisation of this 1972 labour movement, Bahraini labour movements in the past, as Emile Nakhleh argues, had not been 'ideologically orientated' or 'influenced by any particular doctrines'.²⁴ At the outset of the movement, in March 1972, it was 'an expression of the frustrations that have built up over the years within the working class of Bahrain', and was seen as an effect of the impracticable 1957 Labour Ordinance and the regime's failure to manage labour issues.²⁵ Its subsequent politicization derived from the participants' impatience with Al Khalifa's indifference towards labour issue management and objection to the legalisation of trade unions.²⁶ However, what Nakhleh argues somehow oversimplifies the causes of a political turn, as such, in the movement. He overlooks, on the one hand, how these factors related and corresponded to patterned social changes toward capitalist formation around Bahrain's independence and, on the other hand, how 'the political' practices were informed by social forces led by New Arab Left intellectuals who continued the revolutionary momentum from the 1960s

²¹ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/1639 Political Situation in Bahrain', March 20, 1971; Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/1822 Political Situation in Bahrain', 1972, British National Archives.

²² Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/1822 Political Situation in Bahrain', March 11 to 22, 1972.

²³ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/1822 Political Situation in Bahrain', March 11, 1972.

²⁴ Emile Nakhleh, *Bahrain: Political Development in a Modernizing Society* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011), 76.

²⁵ Nakhleh, 81.

²⁶ Nakhleh, 145.

and awakened class consciousness to some extent.

From AlShehabi's ethnographic analysis of the 1972 uprising and his interview with the members of the Constitutive Committee, it is argued that New Arab Left intellectuals were actively leading the movement through coalescing different ideological fractions in the form of the 'Shehabi bloc', which named after Hesham AlShehabi and later succeeded by the People's bloc in the 1973 Parliament. The influence of the New Arab Left on the labour movements was clearly shown throughout its campaign in the street. The Constitutive Committee received 2,500 membership signatures in August 1971 and later reached 5,000 during the March uprising in 1972²⁷. The Constitutive Committee's campaign for labour rights, better working conditions and wages and releasing political prisoners won popular support increasingly and left its footprints on movements and even Bahraini politics. In addition to a petition with 15,000 signatures demanding the release of political prisoners that were arrested in June 1974, there were 28 strikes across Bahrain in the first half of 1974 during which trade unions were also established at ALBA, BAPCO and public sectors like the health department even though such actions were not legalised yet²⁸. This awakening class consciousness resonated among Bahraini leftists, including New Arab Left intellectuals, communists and among oversea Bahraini students. From 1972 until 1978, these students who organised the National Union of Bahraini Students (NUBS) across Kuwait, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Britain, Sweden and the Soviet Union claimed to 'work side by side with the National Movements in Bahrain and to work for democratic rights, plus for the building of labour unions'²⁹.

The class consciousness was shown in a Bahraini activist pamphlet, entitled *Labour Movement and the Struggle for Self-Determination* and published in 1975 in Sweden: one of the countries where the NUBS developed its branches and Bahraini political exiles resided after 1975.³⁰ It considered the history of Bahraini popular

²⁷ AlShehabi, 'Divide and Rule in Bahrain and the Elusive Pursuit for a United Front: The Experience of the Constitutive Committee and the 1972 Uprising', 118–19.

²⁸ 'Bahrain', 1976, 6–7, Arab World Documentation Unit, Old Library, Exeter University.

²⁹ 'Bahrain', 17–18.

³⁰ Raouf Ressaissi, *Labour Movement and the Struggle for Self-Determination* (Malmö, Sweden: ACUPRESS, 1975).

movements from the 1920s until the mid-1970s, stating ‘the battle ... being fought by the Bahraini working class and popular forces has taken the character of that of all workers in the world for indeed their enemy is the same’.³¹ As it further added, the battle was ‘for national self-determination’ and evolved ‘from anti-colonial struggle to the struggle against imperialism’ for substantial Bahrain’s independence in the 1970s:

If the independence of Bahrain meant that the country acquired the qualification of a state, a proper flag, ... membership [of]... international organisations and the creation of ... [its] own armed forces but nothing more, then this independence is needless and contains nothing other than new imperialist schemes.³²

Class consciousness of this kind ideologically cemented Bahraini leftists together and was manifested in popular and labour movements in the first two years of Bahrain’s independence. Moreover, they saw that the intertwined interests of tribalism and colonialism, rooted within society along with capitalist formation, impeded the achievement of substantial independence of post-colonial and late-developing states. While such a manifesto echoed widely the wave of anti-imperialist movements in the third world, it created a challenge to Al Khalifa that sought the preservation of its political and economic privileges from the colonial phase and avoided national unity being driven by popular nationalist movements.

To sum up the moment of Bahrain’s independence, it was given birth in a historical conjuncture that set out a molecular process through which the ruling class attempted to weather a crisis while a new generation of Bahraini nationalist movements began to set its foothold in the post-colonial Bahraini politics. This hinged on qualitative changes in Bahrain’s political and social ties to ‘the international’, which then reconfigured social relations in Bahrain and fuelled different social forces around the issues of sovereignty and labour rights. While these issues were raised and mainly informed by New Arab Left intellectuals and their manifesto of popular Arab nationalism, Al Khalifa’s passive revolution began.

³¹ Ressaissi, prologue.

³² Ressaissi, 8.

5.2 Setting Out on Passive Revolution: the 1972 Constituent Assembly

This section begins to historicise the first specific case relevant to the concept of passive revolution: the 1972 Constituent Assembly. It was seen as a nascent stage of Al Khalifa's top-down 'revolution without revolution'. In this stage, Al Khalifa attempted to connect ideologically to civil society through its subaltern classes as organic intellectuals, and thereby began to forge its hegemony following Bahrain's independence.

5.2.1 *Making organic intellectuals*

Passive revolution, which serves to reconfigures 'the political' of social formation and prevents catastrophic revolutions, represents a process through which the ruling class attempts to forge its hegemonic status by exercising coercion on and obtaining consent from society. Accordingly, as Morton argues, it can also be seen as a 'technique of statecraft which an emergent bourgeois class may deploy by drawing in subaltern social classes while establishing a new state on the basis of the institution of capitalism ... or the expansion of capitalism as a mode of production'.³³ In the context of the Middle East and the Gulf in particular, it might be contested to categorise a tribal regime as 'an emergent bourgeois' at face value. Yet, what Morton argues still has some implications. Passive revolution is a critical stage in which the ruling class attempts to solve a looming crisis that accompanies modern state formation evolving from any other social relations to capitalism. While such a process is practised by a political leadership through organising an alliance with subaltern classes, if successful, it leads to the establishment of the dominant class's hegemony. In other words, these subaltern classes play a role as organic intellectuals in ideologically linking 'political society' and 'civil society' and help the ruling class to create a historical bloc. As a consequence, unity through re-articulation of 'the political' and 'the social' instances of a capitalist state is achieved, facilitating the progress of capitalist state formation.

While the historical moment of Bahrain's independence revolved around a variety of sociopolitical issues, Al Khalifa tried to reconnect its political ties to civil

³³ Morton, 'The Continuum of Passive Revolution', 318.

society, seeking solutions to a looming ruling crisis but, nonetheless, without giving up its political grip. After the March 1972 movement, Al Khalifa started working on the idea of a new constitution and a ministerial reshuffle while the campaign led the New Arab Left went on. Shaikh Khalifa bin Sulman, the Bahraini Prime Minister, organised a succession of *majlis* at which ‘the people’ were given opportunities to air their views, especially on the issue of what forms of political representation would best serve the interests and customs of Bahrain. The discussion concluded with striving for ‘an equal balance between elected and officially nominated representatives’ for the following political reform.³⁴ Al Khalifa’s intention to draft a Constitution was delivered to the society through a Decree announced in June. As a British diplomat to Bahrain observed, the Decree contained ‘no surprises and the initial local reaction [was] one of quiet satisfaction’.³⁵ Just as Al Khalifa promised, the first election was held on 1 December 1972, and the elected members worked together with the Council of Ministers in the Constituent Assembly as a whole to review the Constitution. However, Al Khalifa’s promise did not bring all the intellectuals from different ideological backgrounds onto the same page. Instead, they were divided in terms of whether they should follow up an institutional approach to reform or carry on the popular struggle in the streets.

On the nationalist side, the division was mainly seen between some old cadres of the ANM and the New Arab Left. The case of Abdulaziz Al-Shamlan is worthy of notice. He was a prominent figure on the National Union Committee (NUC) in the mid-1950s and later sent to prison with Abdulrahman Al-Bakir and Abdulali Aliwat on St. Helena, a small island in the South Atlantic where Napoléon Bonaparte was exiled after 1815. After being released in 1961, Al-Shamlan was exiled to London.³⁶ In December 1971, Al-Shamlan’s return to Bahrain was documented by Alexander D. Sterling, former British Political Agent to Bahrain between 1967 and 1969, and the first British Ambassador to Bahrain in 1972:

³⁴ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, ‘FCO 8/1822 Political Situation in Bahrain’.

³⁵ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, ‘FCO 8/1822 Political Situation in Bahrain’, June 24, 1972.

³⁶ Miriam Joyce, ‘The Bahraini Three On St. Helena, 1956-1961’, *Middle East Journal* 4 (2000): 622.

[Abdulaziz Al-Shamlan] went to the Amir [Shaikh Isa bin Sulman Al Khalifa] to make a kind of submission, promising to behave and explaining his past actions as being inspired by patriotic resentment against British influence. The Amir said that Shamlan had become corpulent, looked older than his years (early fifties) and [gave] the impression of wanting only a quiet life. The Amir felt that Bahrain had changed sufficiently since Shamlan went to St. Helena in 1956 to offer little provocation to a retired rebel. This may be true but it is also over-optimistic: if Shamlan wants to lend himself to subversion or lead it, the mere existence of the Amir would give him grounds enough. However, the police are confident that they can handle him if need be and, while he certainly needs the surveillance which he is getting, I think on balance that his return is one up for the Government.³⁷

Al-Shamlan was only one example of old cadres of the ANM becoming less radical. Unlike Al-Bakir and Aliwat, who were exiled to Lebanon and Iraq and never set foot on Bahraini homeland again, Al-Shamlan pledged loyalty to the state of Bahrain under Al Khalifa's sovereignty. He chose to deflect from labour activist strategies and participate in coming electoral politics, whereas some New Arab Left intellectuals continued to commit to popular movements outside institutions, working at the grassroots.³⁸ His case shows that Al Khalifa attempted to incorporate the ANM forces into the process of political reform. While the revolutionary upheaval swept the Gulf and positioned New Arab Left intellectuals as counter-hegemonic forces of Arab nationalism, these old cadres of the ANM were less threatening and very helpful to Al Khalifa. In addition to elected members, the Constituent Assembly in 1972 included eight nominated members constituted by people mainly from middle-class backgrounds and Cabinet members.³⁹ These people later became critical figures, helping to facilitate Al Khalifa implement a variety of state developmental projects in the 1970s. As Hanieh argues, such political co-option was buttressed by Al Khalifa's 'gift' given to 'sections of the older merchant class and new social elites' through the

³⁷ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/1822 Political Situation in Bahrain'.

³⁸ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/1822 Political Situation in Bahrain', December 24, 1972.

³⁹ These eight nominated members include Ibrahim Al-Arrayed (poet and a left-wing Nasserist), Sadiq Al-Baharna (Chairman of the Shia Waqf Committee), Mohammed Hassan Diwani (Shia local businessman in trading), Mohammed Yusuf Jalal (Chairman of the Gulf Publishing Company and businessman), Ibrahim Kamal (leading figure in the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and President of the Muharraq Club), Ahmed Ali Kanoo (Chairman of the internationally trading firm and Head of the biggest Bahrain merchant family), Tariq Almoayyed (active in industrial and philanthropic affairs), and Rashid Al-Zayani (member of a well-known family in Bahraini new industries and Head of the Zayani merchant clan). *Gulf Mirror*, December 10, 1972, Bahrain Fiche, AWDU, Exeter University; Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/1822 Political Situation in Bahrain', December 12, 1972.

intervention of the state apparatus into the redistribution of land and oil-wealth.⁴⁰ More importantly, they functioned as organic intellectuals who bridged ideological connections between Al Khalifa and Bahraini society in the process of passive revolution.

5.2.2 *Between Assembly and Street*

A division between some old cadres of the ANM and the New Arab Left, as noted, registered different ideological currents within Arab nationalism. At the same time, divergence also emerged within 'the Left', between New Arab Left intellectuals who rejected institutional reform approaches and those who accepted them. In the first place, their division was shown in their campaign for the election of the Constituent Assembly. Communists, nationalists and Ba'athists willing to join the election paid much attention to domestic issues including press freedom, labour rights, checks on the Police and Security Service. It seemed that foreign affairs did not feature on their major agenda, nor was xenophobia brought up.⁴¹ However, for New Arab Left intellectuals, even though they also wished to see these issues raised, they resisted the institutional approach dictated by Al Khalifa and colonial remnants in the Gulf. As will be shown later, their resistance was clearly demonstrated in their boycott of the 1973 parliamentary election. Regarding the activities and political agenda of New Arab Left intellectuals, Robert Tesh, British Ambassador to Bahrain between late 1972 and 1975, noted: The New Arab Left managed to indoctrinate some candidates and to interfere in the election by calling for a larger scale of popular movement that could discredit the Assembly. But it seemed that the election was going smoothly under the Special Branch's and Al Khalifa's control. Some contentious issues during the election were constrained and not revolutionised into anti-regime ideas. Al Khalifa's philosophy of working with the 'goodies' and suppressing the 'baddies', as Tesh termed it, appeared to be effective in fulfilling the democratic experiment and also maintaining its legitimacy.⁴²

⁴⁰ Hanieh, *Capitalism and Class in the Gulf Arab States*, 66–68.

⁴¹ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/1822 Political Situation in Bahrain'.

⁴² Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/1822 Political Situation in Bahrain', November 25, 1972.

The election of the Constituent Assembly took place on 1 December 1972, with a high turn-out, 'between 82 and 97 per cent of the electorate voted'.⁴³ The organic intellectuals organised with the ANM forces and under Abdulaziz Al-Shamlan's leadership won 7 seats out of 22 seats in total. The result was acceptable to Al Khalifa as those candidates having affiliations with more radical ideologies outside Bahrain were seemingly ineffective in the election. As Tesh observed, although the Assembly only served as a transitional stage to the Constitution and the future Parliament, the political landscape composed of the organic intellectuals should reassure Al Khalifa and the rest of the members nominated by the Amir could become back-up for the regime's rule. In particular, most of the nominated members were 'solid and fairly senior representatives of the business community'⁴⁴ and the reshuffle of the Council of Ministers also brought some Shia businessmen into the Constituent Assembly.⁴⁵ These middle-class-oriented forces with less radical views gave, to a large extent, Al Khalifa confidence in the subsequent parliamentary election in 1973. Moreover, the election result in 1972 also showed that the religious forces, which had had a low political profile prior to Bahrain's independence, began to be involved in formal politics from then on. Shia members of the Constituent Assembly, especially the *al-Da'wa* current, won their votes largely from villages in *Muharraq* and *Sitra* that, as observed by a British diplomat to Bahrain, were 'conservative-minded' and different from other nationalists in urban areas.⁴⁶ In the Constituent Assembly, they formed another opposition voice that did not adhere to nationalist or communist ideologies. To Al Khalifa, the political landscape in the Constituent Assembly seemed to have a favourable balance among different groups. Even though the Shia members were keen to lead Bahrain on a more religious path and 'not so much in favour of the Al Khalifa [regime]', they were 'against the revolutionaries'.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, at this point, the political rise of the Bahrain Shia did no harm to Al Khalifa and somehow played a role

⁴³ The estimation is given by Shaikh Isa Bin Mohammed, the Minister of Information. *Gulf Mirror*, December 3, 1972, Bahrain Fiche, AWDU, Exeter University.

⁴⁴ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/1822 Political Situation in Bahrain', December 12, 1972.

⁴⁵ Foreign and Commonwealth Office., December 19, 1972.

⁴⁶ Foreign and Commonwealth Office., December 3 and 24, 1972.

⁴⁷ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/1975 Political Situation in Bahrain', 1973, British National Archives.

in curbing any progressive actions taken by nationalists and leftists.

5.2.3 *Marching to the Constitution*

From 16 December 1972, the Constituent Assembly started to discuss the draft constitution designed by Al Khalifa's government. In the discussion, the most notable issues revolved around those of women's right to vote, an Islamic State, the Privy Purse,⁴⁸ Security laws and the Amir's power to make Treaties.⁴⁹ Throughout the process, some nationalist members proposed a couple of amendments that were seen as subversive by Al Khalifa. But Shia members checked these radical elements with their local community support, as Al Khalifa expected to see. At the same time, Al Khalifa kept using tactics of suppression and conciliation. On the one hand, Al Khalifa managed to balance itself rather successfully between nationalist and Shia members in the Constituent Assembly. On the other, the Special Branch frequently arrested activists who were suspected of having close connections with underground cells outside Bahrain, especially the PFLOAG⁵⁰, described by Sterling as 'the rats ... working in the Bahrain basement...[and developing] a nasty situation'.⁵¹

In June 1973, the Constituent Assembly completed the amendments to the draft constitution and announced that a parliamentary election would take place at the end of 1973. To Al Khalifa, it made some concessions to society through organic intellectuals, showing good will to the people in a democratic game, but without losing substantive powers. First, Al Khalifa supported Al-Shamlan to run as Speaker of the Constituent Assembly. Although he was beaten by Ibrahim Al Arrayed, a well-known Shia poet and scholar in the Arab world, Al Khalifa seemed to successfully redirect popular attention away from the street to a formal political platform. Second, Al Khalifa made some concessions to Shia members in support of legalisation for Islam as Bahrain's state religion.⁵² It also felt satisfied when Shia members constrained

⁴⁸ Shaikh Khalifa had a fixed annual sum of 6 million Bahrain Dinar for as long as he rules, of which 2 million is distributed to his family. See Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/1975 Political Situation in Bahrain', June 4, 1973.

⁴⁹ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/1975 Political Situation in Bahrain', May 1, 1973.

⁵⁰ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/1975 Political Situation in Bahrain', February 27, 1973.

⁵¹ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/1639 Political Situation in Bahrain'.

⁵² Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/1975 Political Situation in Bahrain'.

themselves in their discussion of religious affairs, even though they were largely following the direction of the Al Madani clan, one of the influential Shia communities in Bahrain, outside the Constituent Assembly.⁵³

Having as such a favourable experience in the Constituent Assembly, Al Khalifa had more confidence in incorporating different social forces under its reign during the crisis and upheaval led by the New Arab Left within and without Bahrain. After the PFLOAG headquarters in Bahrain were demolished due to an accidental explosion caused by two members in July 1973, it was believed that Al Khalifa then had a better grasp of dealing with remaining revolutionary activists in the street.⁵⁴ Yet, for New Arab Left intellectuals, the Constituent Assembly was not a cheerful political achievement spearheaded by the people, let alone a representation of the Bahraini people as the major subject of sovereignty. It was rather ‘the political change’, as they put it, that ‘the imperialists wanted to introduce as part of their strategy’ for the Gulf in support of the ‘appearance of independence’, while Al Khalifa ‘sift[ed] through the old dossiers of nationalist demands to find what could be done now and got away with’.⁵⁵ As noted earlier, these ideas were appeared in the New Arab Left’s campaign during the election and connected to their demand for labour rights.

At this point, nationalist forces were split between the ANM and the New Arab Left. The latter was identified as an external revolutionary stretch from outside Bahrain and suppressed continuously by the Special Branch, whereas the former played a critical role in letting Al Khalifa forge its ideological links to Bahraini society and continue the momentum of passive revolution into the 1973 Parliament.

5.3 Struggle within Passive Revolution: the 1973 Parliamentary Experiment

The present chapter has so far shown: while geopolitical and social changes came to the Gulf around the time of Bahrain’s independence, Al Khalifa took

⁵³ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, ‘FCO 8/1975 Political Situation in Bahrain’, June 12, 1973.

⁵⁴ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, ‘FCO 8/1975 Political Situation in Bahrain’, July 23, 1973.

⁵⁵ The People’s Front in Bahrain, ‘The Gulf Studies No.2: Bahrain, Service Boom and Class Struggle’, 24.

advantage of this moment, taking the old cadres of the ANM and some merchant classes as its organic intellectuals and forging its hegemony for the nascent stage of passive revolution. In what follows, this section proceeds further with the concept of passive revolution by investigating the second case of the 1973 parliamentary experiment. The reason why it is called an experiment is revealed, with hindsight, via a historical investigation of its development. Nonetheless, it shows some characteristics of passive revolution that are able to explain state formation in the Bahraini case going beyond Gramsci's original ideas. That is to say, as a critical historical process responding to a crisis and moving towards modern capitalist state formation, the process and consequences of passive revolution in a post-colonial state like Bahrain were unstable and unpredictable, considering the dynamic political struggles among different social forces. As Stuart Hall reminds us, 'Gramsci warns us in the *Notebooks* that a crisis is not an immediate event but a process: it can last for a long time, and can be very differently resolved by restoration, by reconstruction or by passive transformism. Sometimes more stable, sometimes more unstable.'⁵⁶ As will be shown later, the case of the 1973 Parliament resonated with Hall's reminder. It shows how the struggles among different social forces inside and outside Parliament evolved in a broader context of geopolitical competition and capitalist development and eventually led to dissolution in August 1975.

5.3.1 Rise of the Bahraini Left

The election for the first Bahraini parliament was held on 7 December 1973; yet its subsequent development did not appear to be substantive 'national unity' in Bahrain's independence era. Although some New Arab Left intellectuals took both independence and the Parliament to be an 'imperialist design' or an imperfect political achievement, those who participated in the Parliament nonetheless considered it a turning point and a stepping stone for tackling Bahrain's 'historic backwardness' in many aspects. They drew lessons from other Arab states, e.g. Kuwait, in drafting Bahrain's constitution with certain modifications, which were accepted by Al Khalifa,

⁵⁶ Stuart Hall, 'Gramsci and Us', *Marxism Today*, June 1987, 20.

the nominated members and even other external powers.⁵⁷ However, the result and developments following the 1973 election gave Al Khalifa and its allies an unexpected shock: the rise of the Bahraini left around counter-hegemonic forces. Apart from 14 members nominated by Al Khalifa out of 44 seats in total, the radical leftists won eight seats, equal to the independent nationalists and some other independent candidates, and the Shias, including clerics and other intellectuals, won six seats of the other 30 seats. Beyond Al Khalifa's expectations guaranteed by Special Branch, there was a dramatic political landslide towards the leftists as a primary force that could strategically ally itself with others in Parliament.⁵⁸ For Al Khalifa, the organic intellectuals of its hegemony lost their advantages to counter-hegemonic forces. This political landslide reignited the political struggle between Al Khalifa and New Arab Left forces. It not only changed the political agenda of New Arab Left intellectuals in Bahrain, but also shifted Al Khalifa's attitude towards the issue of popular political participation.

From Tesh's report on the 1973 election, it is argued that both Britain and the Al Khalifa regime did not expect the result. Their confidence in the previous year in containing New Arab Left forces was replaced by anxiety, and even paranoid thinking that rarely appeared before the election. As an appendix to the post-election report on 11 December, Tesh provided the list of the elected parliamentary members with all members' ideological background and their political affiliations in the Parliament. The group of 'the Left' conceived by Tesh seemed to become larger with some Ba'athist and anti-West members being identified as nationalist sympathisers. Among these members, Ali Rabia was noted as a communist in the report. However, in fact, he has never been a communist but a nationalist left whose ideological affiliation was with the New Arab Left instead of communists⁵⁹. Despite Britain's paranoid thinking, Bahrain's political dynamics did change along with the rise of the Left, which carried on the momentum led by New Arab Left intellectuals from the 1972 campaign and created a crisis to the regime in several aspects, leaving some legacies to Bahraini

⁵⁷ Interview with Ali Qasim Rabia, *Manama*, December 13, 2015; Interview with Ali Fakhro, *Manama*, January 5, 2016.

⁵⁸ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/1975 Political Situation in Bahrain'.

⁵⁹ Interview with Ali Qasim Rabia, *Manama*, December 13, 2015

politics afterwards.

The List of Elected Members of the 1973 Bahraini Parliament⁶⁰

Constituency	Ward	Name	Ideological background/ Bloc
Manama	1 st	Abdul Rasul Al-Jishi	Ba'athist/ Nationalist Bloc or Sympathisers
		Khalid Ibharim Al-Thawadi	Communist/ People's Bloc
	2 nd	Abdul Hadi Khalfa	Communist/ People's Bloc
		Hasan Jawad al-Jishi	Ba'athist/ Nationalist Bloc or Sympathisers
	3 rd	Mohammed Salman Ahmed Al-Hamad	Ba'athist
	4 th	Mohammed Abdullah Harmas	Loyalist/ Independents
		Mohsin Hamid Al-Marhoon	Communist/ People's Bloc
	5 th	Ali Abdullah Saleh	Ba'athist/ Nationalist Bloc or Sympathisers
	6 th	Hamad Abdulla Ali Abul	Ba'athist/ Nationalist Bloc or Sympathisers
	7 th	Ali Abdel A'al al-Biladi	Independent
Muharraq	8 th	Jassim Ahmed Murad	Anti-West, anti-Communist/ Nationalist Bloc or Sympathisers
		Abdullah Ali al-Muawadah	PFLOAG/ People's Bloc
	9 th	Ali Qasim Rabia	Communist/ People's Bloc
		Mohammed Jabber Sabbah	PFLOAG/ People's Bloc
	10 th	Isa Hassan al-Thawadi	Ex-ANM/ People's Bloc
		Ibrahim Fakhroo	Anti-West, anti-Khalifa/ Nationalist Bloc or Sympathisers
	11 th	Khalifa Ali al-Bin Ali	Ba'athist/ Nationalist Bloc or Sympathisers
	12 th	Abdullah Mansoor Mohammed Ali	Independent
	13 th	Mustafa Mohammed Nasser al-Qasab	Religious Bloc
		Alawi Sayyed Mafoodh al-Sharakat	Religious Bloc

⁶⁰ The list was combined with Tesh's telegram to London, December 11, 'FCO 8/1975 Political Situation in Bahrain' and BBC reports, December 13, 1972, Bahrain Fiche, AWDU, Exeter University.

	14 th	Abdullah Mohammed al-Madani	Religious Bloc
	15 th	Shaikh Isa Ahmed Qassim	Religious Bloc
		Shaikh Abdul Amir Mansoor al-Jamri	Religious Bloc
	16 th	Abbas Ahmed Ali	Independent
Isa Town	17 th	Yousuf Salman Mohammed Kamal	Moderate Nationalist, anti-Ba'ath/ Nationalist Bloc or Sympathisers
	18 th	Abdul Aziz Mansoor al-A'ali	Independent
Sitra	19 th	Hassan Ali al-Mutawaj	Religious Bloc
		Salman Shaikh Mohammed Nasser	Independent
Rifa'a	20 th	Shaikh Ibrahim bin Salman al-Khalifa	Violent, anti-West/ Independent
		Khalifa Ahmed al Darani	Independent

First, in 1972, some New Arab Left intellectuals had boycotted formal politics of the Constituent Assembly, staying in the street to disseminate pamphlets for their campaign. Despite still embracing the idea of popular approaches to politics, they now adjusted strategies cooperated with a de facto political party—the People's Bloc, including Ba'athists, Communists and some New Arab Left intellectuals in Parliament, and attempted to include other independent nationalists. Most of the agendas in the 1972 campaign proposed by Shehabi bloc were raised in the parliamentary politics that showed how pervasive the New Arab Left was. Second, on a closer inspection of the component of the votes going to the People's Bloc, eight elected Members of Parliament were from the urban constituencies of *Manama* and *Muhharraq* (see the List of Elected Members of the 1973 Bahraini Parliament), with more than 4,000 votes out of about 16,000 votes in total. They beat up some old cadres of the ANM and then became the voice of urban areas in Parliament, most of their supporters were young Bahrainis who shared popular Arab nationalist ideas.⁶¹ This sent Al Khalifa a warning sign that its major support from urban areas and the middle classes was undermined. The socialist and nationalist manifesto of the People's Bloc became attractive and largely accepted by urban voters, especially the demand for '51% participation in the oil industry, the nationalisation of foreign firms, freedom for trade unions, curbs on the

⁶¹ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/1975 Political Situation in Bahrain', December 9, 1973.

power of the police, Bahrainisation, and no foreign military bases'.⁶²

To Al Khalifa, the People's Bloc brought all the different social forces within Parliament together, which resonated with the New Arab Left manifesto in the street. As Tesh observed:

The danger is rather that the People's Bloc will be able to maintain their alliance with the National Bloc [of Ba'athist and nationalist sympathisers], play their cards cleverly so as to extend their support in...Parliament, build up an organisation particularly among Labour, and force the Government into a series of compromises which will weaken [Al Khalifa's] position.⁶³

This political change meant that the effort to penetrate and crush the Bahraini left by Al Khalifa and Special Branch had little success and backfired, as the election result showed. To the regime, the trajectory of passive revolution initiated earlier could go out of control at any point and then be hijacked by unified counter-hegemonic forces increasingly organised within and outside Parliament. Soon after the opening of the first session of Parliament on 16 December 1973, these crises to the Al Khalifa became more tangible. The key issues in Parliament were no longer inward looking like the phase of the Constituent Assembly in 1972. Instead, these issues were related to a broader political agenda. This not only criticised Al Khalifa's failure in managing socio-economic problems, but also denounced the remnants of Western colonialism: The State Security Law and the US military presence in *Juffair*, both of which fundamentally contradicted the idea of the people as the main political subject of Bahrain's sovereignty promulgated by the New Arab Left. At this point, a historical bloc heralded by the New Arab Left was forged among social forces within and without the Parliament. Its substantial meaning lies at

...the public alliance of the different forces in society, whether communist, Arab nationalist, or Islamist, based on the common goal of achieving democracy in an undemocratic state, regardless of the fundamental differences between their respective ideologies and belief. Thus, the aim of democratic rule is to serve as a tool to unite the different forces as well as common end-goal...[It was] the only way to counteract the regime's entrenched system of

⁶² Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/1975 Political Situation in Bahrain', December 11, 1973.

⁶³ Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

divide-and-rule⁶⁴.

5.3.2 *Al Khalifa's concession*

To establish a hegemonic status through a passive revolution in Parliament, Al Khalifa as the dominant class inevitably faced a first challenge of solidifying necessary material bases for its hegemony. As Gramsci reminds us, 'though hegemony is ethical-political, it must also be economic, must necessarily be based on the decisive function exercised by the leading group in the decisive nucleus of economic activity'.⁶⁵ While an open-door policy was introduced after the British withdrawal and was followed by the emergence of new capitalist classes for the regime's ruling base, Al Khalifa was nonetheless still subject to its inability to deal with labour issues and the rising cost of living. Accordingly, these issues became the kernel around which counter-hegemonic forces unified and mobilised their support from civil society in the first place.

Following some demands made by labour movements in March 1972, calls for the legalization of trade unions and Bahrainisation soon preoccupied the People's Bloc in Parliament. Regarding Bahrainisation, it aimed to give Bahrainis preference in employment and to tackle unemployment by limiting the increasing numbers of expatriate workers in Bahrain and trying to provide more job opportunities to Bahrainis. As for trade unions, the People's Bloc hoped to give labourers more powers to organise as legal groups to negotiate with Al Khalifa's government on issues of improving working conditions and pay-increases. However, at this point, Al Khalifa felt threatened and the previous promise made in March 1972 to legalise trade unions was aborted. As Yusuf Shirawi, Minister of Development and Industry, recounted to Tesh about how Shaikh Khalifa bin Sulman Al Khalifa, Bahraini Prime Minister, saw these issues: now, 'having delegated [Shaikh Khalifa's] powers first to a Council of Ministers and then to [Parliament], Bahrain is not going to create another centre of power in the shape of a trade union organisation within the four-year lifetime of the present [Parliament]'.⁶⁶ To the Al Khalifa regime, alongside the strikes at the Post

⁶⁴ AlShehabi, 'Divide and Rule in Bahrain and the Elusive Pursuit for a United Front: The Experience of the Constitutive Committee and the 1972 Uprising', 123.

⁶⁵ Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 161.

⁶⁶ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/2180 Bahrain Internal Political Situation', 1974, British National Archives.

Office in *Manama* and the Bahraini Slipway Company, seen as rash, in March 1974, the legalisation of trade unions would give away more power to the Left who were collaborating with more forces in the street and within Parliament, and thus posing an enormous threat.

Without having the option of setting up trade unions legally, the Al Khalifa regime chose to implement a series of socio-economic reforms to reinforce its tottering ruling status. On 16 March 1974, the Council of Ministers announced that,

...the pay and social allowances of all government employees were increased by amounts ranging up to 33%; the national minimum wage was put up by 33%; [more than 3.5 million Bahrain dinar] was to be provided for subsidies on basic imported foods such as rice, sugar, flour, meat and vegetable oils; an agency was set up to keep a watch on prices and to stop unjustified increases; Trade Ministers of other Gulf States were to be invited to a conference aimed at unifying export and import practices for essential commodities; and low-cost housing plans were to be speeded up in cooperation with the World Bank.⁶⁷

These proposals, intending to deflect the challenge from the Left, seemed to work well during the oil boom in 1973 and 1974. Nonetheless, this also exposed the divergent attitudes among some government figures toward the function of Parliament. Other than the hard-core conservatives within Al Khalifa, a group of less conservative figures, including Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak, Bahraini Foreign Minister, Yusuf Shirawi, Minister of Development and Industry, Ali Fakhro, Minister of Health, and Jawad Al Arrayed, Head of Cabinet Affairs, were more optimistic about Parliament. Some of them were from a Ba'athist background, expecting that some socialist ideas could be put into practice through an institutional approach instead of by radical means. For example, Ali Fakhro, an ex-Ba'athist studying medicine at the American University of Beirut (AUB) in the 1950s and later one of the critical figures in Al Khalifa's government, recalled his appointment at that time:

I believed in social justice. I believe that differences between the very rich and the very poor should be reduced...we brought [these ideas] from AUB Pan-Arab nationalism, [they] included...freedom, independence and socialism ... Shaikh Khalifa, our Prime Minister knew I was a Ba'ath but he said, 'It's okay. He is good, let him come.' Of course, I did not act like a Ba'ath, I still acted

⁶⁷ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/2180 Bahrain Internal Political Situation'. March 18, 1974.

like a person who was liberal in his thoughts and his ideas. I did not hide anything. Shaikh Khalifa knew that I was only trying to be a fair human being. That is all. The ideology does not matter. It is not about words. It is not [about] the name. It is the essence of what you do. If the essence is fairness and empathy with those who are weak, with those who are marginalized, with those who are in need, what is wrong with that?⁶⁸

He added his views about Parliament:

[In Parliament,] I...[was] very big [on] being Liberal minded and Leftist, [and I] had [a] very close relationship with...elected members, very close. [However, I told them:] be careful. Be careful, don't go to extremes. Let this experiment mature. Let it become stronger, let it become more rooted in Bahrain. Then it will be difficult for anybody to try and destroy it. [It is] exactly the same now in Kuwait [with] the ruling families ... They will never dare to destroy it.⁶⁹

Some figures like Fakhro believed that the unrest could be settled by making a few concessions in Parliament, a steady pace of socio-economic reform and Al Khalifa's full commitment to the Arab cause and the Palestinian issue. These tactics could beat the Left in the street and redirect people's attention to the more sublime goal of Arab unification.

5.3.3 *Ad hoc alliance and dissolution*

While Al Khalifa made some concessions, the demands over sociopolitical issues at the same time created ad hoc cross-ideological forces in Parliament, organised among elected members from both the People's Bloc and the Religious Bloc. This cooperation forged, to a large extent, a more independent role for Parliament and was represented in the issues of the presence of the US navy in *Juffair* and the Security Law after 1965.⁷⁰ To Al Khalifa, the challenges became troublesome when unified counter-hegemonic forces became more mature, creating a collective will among different social groups on the national and regional scales. On 17 November 1973, the NFL in Bahrain decided to collaborate with the Iraqi Ba'ath. It meant that a cross-border revolutionary connection was working substantially, in a way whereby financial support could come from Iraq and sustain leftist underground activities.⁷¹ In addition,

⁶⁸ Interview with Ali Fakhro, *Manama*, January 5, 2016.

⁶⁹ Interview with Ali Fakhro, *Manama*, January 5, 2016.

⁷⁰ Valeri, 'Contentious Politics in Bahrain: Opposition Cooperation between Regime Manipulation and Youth Radicalisation', 136.

⁷¹ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/1975 Political Situation in Bahrain'.

Al Khalifa was beset by the ongoing reorganisation of PFLOAG underground cells continuously informing Bahraini popular movements and parliamentary politics. In particular, after a top-level conference of Marxist groups in Beirut, more action could be taken in the military and industry and within Parliament⁷².

The alarm over the formation of unified counter-hegemonic forces resulted in Al Khalifa's attitude turning harsher and firmer and wishing to crush them. Al Khalifa intended to take advantage of the rift between the People's Bloc and the Religious Bloc, instigating the later to isolate the former in Parliament.⁷³ For example, when the People's Bloc opposed the Religious Bloc's proposal for 'rigid segregation between the sexes in hospitals, schools and the administration', the Religious Bloc in turn rejected the proposal to make 1 May a public holiday.⁷⁴ In addition to 'divide-and-rule' tactics, those ministers who used to be more liberal towards Parliament were losing their patience with its slow progress, impeded by the People's Bloc. Along with some radical agendas fermenting in the street, Al Khalifa decided to act tough. As Ian Henderson told Robert Tesh, he was 'back on the line that the Government ought to introduce some form of security legislation, so as to stop the leftists going on apace'.⁷⁵ Meanwhile, when strikes broke out among maintenance welders in an aluminium smelter in June 1974, Al Khalifa refused to make any further concessions and sent the riot police to arrest the demonstrators, including Abdulhadi Khalaf, one of the influential active Marxists in Bahrain.⁷⁶ While Al Khalifa displayed its coercive power, the physical means brought back Al Khalifa's confidence to crush 'the rats'. As Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak, Bahraini Foreign Minister, said to Tesh after the session of Parliament on 23 June 1974: 'for once we have taken the initiative'.

While New Arab Left forces strengthened their foothold, Al Khalifa would rather abandon the idea of political dialogue so as to prevent revolutionary seeds from taking root. As Michael Herb notes, 'faced with a choice of abdication or repression when

⁷² Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/1975 Political Situation in Bahrain', December 29, 1973.

⁷³ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/2180 Bahrain Internal Political Situation'.

⁷⁴ Foreign and Commonwealth Office., April 29, 1974.

⁷⁵ Foreign and Commonwealth Office., June 10, 1974.

⁷⁶ Foreign and Commonwealth Office., June 16 and 27, 1974.

revolutionary pressure builds, the leader represses', as political reform might undermine 'the [established] patron-client network on which the regime rests'.⁷⁷ After the crackdown in June 1974, Al Khalifa started to draft a new State Security Law to replace the 1965 Emergency Law during the Parliament recess in September. The law was enacted as the Amiri Decree and announced in October. Even though it clearly said that a detainee has the right to appeal to the High Court, it nonetheless gave the Ministry of Interior the power to arrest and detain suspects for up to three years. At the same time, the Al Khalifa regime also drafted a law permitting trade unions. But, it was on condition that no political, religious and inter-union activities were allowed, any dispute would be settled by conciliation and arbitration by the Al Khalifa government, and strikes and lockouts were banned.⁷⁸ As Tesh observed, these measures seemed to repel for a moment the People's Bloc overt ambitions, diverting their interest away from the issue of the US military presence.⁷⁹ The new State Security Law gave Al Khalifa the confidence to dissolve Parliament and suspend parts of the Constitution in August 1975, which was followed by suppression of the New Arab Left under the Security Law throughout the following two decades or so. The idea of popular political participation was never revived until the early 2000s.

At this point, the process of passive revolution since Bahrain's independence was terminated in 1975, after which Al Khalifa's ruling status merely relied upon exercising coercion, rather than obtaining consent from civil society. A historical restoration by which Al Khalifa tried to forge its hegemony in the State of Bahrain was interrupted.

5.4 Historical Outcome: Incomplete Hegemonic State of Bahrain

Why did the parliamentary experiment in Bahrain fail? What was its impact on the political struggle within Bahrain? And more importantly, how can this failed

⁷⁷ Michael Herb, *All in the Family: Absolutism, Revolution, and Democracy in the Middle Eastern Monarchies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 15.

⁷⁸ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/2180 Bahrain Internal Political Situation'.

⁷⁹ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/2415 Bahrain Internal Political Situation', 1975, British National Archives.

experiment help us to explain the ideological development of Arab nationalism and its interplay with Bahrain's policy towards regional alignment? In most research on Bahrain, it is maintained that the unsolved antagonism between Al Khalifa and other social forces on the issues of the US military presence and the State Security Law was the final blow bringing Parliament to an end. In what follows, I intend to add to the existing understanding by giving a supplementary explanation which sheds light on the social bases of dissolution, and furthermore outlines its outcome. I argue that the dissolution of Parliament in 1975 was an interruption to the process of passive revolution since the early 1970s in Bahrain, which then had the historical outcome of an incomplete hegemonic state in Bahrain. To substantiate my argument, this section begins with a discussion of the dissolution under international pressure.

5.4.1 'International' pressure and its solution

As this thesis has asserted, in chapter 2, Gramsci did realise the significance of social change on the international scale to socio-political dynamics on the national one. In this vein, I further argue that the foremost factor explaining the failure of the parliamentary experiment derives from the international pressure of capitalist formation. With this argument, I do not intend to embrace a fully structuralist account but to show how international pressure lays the ground, and the struggle between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces mediates the result. What is more important was how Al Khalifa dealt with the international pressure of capitalist formation as it required more material resources to sustain its ruling status and preserve corresponding social relations to 'the international'.

From the preceding discussion, conceived in Gramsci's insights, we know that one of the notable characteristics of a successful passive revolution by the dominant class is to partly subsume the demands of subordinate classes into its political project of hegemony and to satisfy some of their interests. In doing so, this overall political project is supposed to include 'the articulation of different modes of social, cultural and economic leadership'.⁸⁰ As shown earlier, in sections 5.1 and 5.2, though faced with some challenges from the New Arab Left, Al Khalifa's project appeared to

⁸⁰ Thomas, 'Hegemony, Passive Revolution and the Modern Prince', 27.

proceed smoothly at first with the realisation of Bahrain's formal independence and then a series of political reforms in the early 1970s. As new capital classes emerged along with what Hanieh calls a process of capital accumulation in the Gulf, they played critical roles through which Al Khalifa set out its historical restoration and linked itself to society. Moreover, their demands and ideas were partly accepted and pushed forward by Al Khalifa (see the case of Ali Fakhro in section 5.2). These demands not only met some expectations of the old cadres of the ANM and the People's Bloc, but also reconciled with state-led economic development plans without undermining Al Khalifa's ruling status. For example, on the issue of the nationalisation of oil production, Yusuf Shirawi, Bahraini Minister of Development, announced in September 1974 that the Bahraini government was now a 60 per cent majority shareholder in BAPCO.⁸¹ This announcement was also later supported by the Bahraini Prime Minister, in March 1975, saying that Bahrain 'will seek nationalisation of its oil resources following Kuwait's step in this regard'.⁸² However, it seemed that this plan, among others, did not solve a lasting political struggle within Bahraini society that was represented concretely in the issues of unemployment, labour rights and high living costs. Nor did these plans pacify and demoralise the leadership of New Arab Left intellectuals of counter-hegemonic forces around popular Arab Nationalism, both within Parliament and in the street.

The issue of the nationalisation of oil production, to New Arab Left intellectuals, was a case of whether they could achieve the objective of the people as the major political subject, just like other Arab States did, so as to realise popular sovereignty in light of Arab nationalism. If this was the case, Bahrain's economic ties to the international capitalist market could have been rearticulated. Al Khalifa's ruling status and the overall social relations upon which it rested could have been undermined. Yet, between seeking consent and exercising coercion, Al Khalifa surrendered to the latter and chose to dissolve the Parliament as 'some of the neighbouring states on which Bahrain's prosperity depends had threatened to break relations if the communists were

⁸¹ *Gulf Mirror*, September 29, 1974, Bahrain Fiche, AWDU, Exeter University.

⁸² *Kuwait Daily News*, March 16, 1975, Bahrain Fiche, AWDU, Exeter University.

not controlled'.⁸³ As such, Al Khalifa demonstration of coercive power won support from some newly formed capital classes within Bahrain. Furthermore, it allayed external actors' suspicions of revolutionary seeds being sown in the Gulf, especially Saudi Arabia. For Saudi Arabia, its political influence in the region grew along with the accumulation of oil wealth since the early 1970s, a notable case being its leading role in the 1973 oil embargo. The Saudi regime established its leadership within a conservative inner circle through an economic conduit of patron-client ties, seeking to maintain its strategic interest of counterbalancing the radicals of Arab nationalism and communism, as well as maintaining an advantage in the competition with the Shah's Iran.⁸⁴ To Al Khalifa itself, before a series of state development projects was fully fledged, from which it acquired sufficient material resources, the toughness towards the idea of popular political participation preserved Saudi-Bahraini economic ties. In other words, Al Khalifa's political choices in response to the international pressure of capitalist development led to the failure of the parliamentary experiment.

At this point, reference to Peter Thomas' account of the conditions for a successful passive revolution might help to sum up my discussion of why the parliamentary experiment failed. As he argues for passive revolution:

There were indeed objective conditions ... that had led to its emergence at around the same time: namely, the threat of militant working class movements demanding...the continual revolutionizing of the mode of production and the new forms of collective social life in modernity – in the labour process, in urbanization, and so forth – were extended to include substantial equality at the level of the economic structure of the society. However, passive revolution had not been necessitated by this economic structure or inscribed in modernity as its telos. Rather, its *successful imposition* had involved conscious, political choices: on the one hand, the choice of the ruling classes to develop strategies to disaggregate those working classes and confine them to an economic-corporative level within the existing society; on the other, the political choices of the subaltern classes that had resulted in a failure to elaborate their own hegemonic apparatuses capable of resisting the absorptive logic of the passive

⁸³ It was noted by Robert Tesh, British Ambassador to Bahrain, from a conversation with Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak. See Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/2180 Bahrain Internal Political Situation'.

⁸⁴ William B. Quandt, *Saudi Arabia in the 1980s: Foreign Policy, Security, and Oil* (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1981), 22–28.

revolution.⁸⁵

Following Thomas's account, however, I do not imply that the case of the dissolution of Parliament in 1975 registered the failure of passive revolution. Rather, what I highlight in this case is that the process of passive revolution as a historical restoration could be seen as being interrupted by considering the ways in which the dominant class dealt with political struggle under international pressure. When it was interrupted, the characteristic of 'passive', or conservative, therefore dimmed that of 'revolution', and coercion prevailed over consent in the assemblage of hegemony.

5.4.2 *Al Khalifa's 'dictatorship without hegemony'*

The result of an interrupted historical restoration brought about an outcome for Bahrain: Al Khalifa failed to represent the general interests of 'the people' through the means of popular political participation, and thus a process of forging an integral state of Bahrain – hegemony constituted of both coercion and consent – was also interrupted. The significance of this interruption as such lies particularly in the characteristic of the non-equilibrium of domination (coercion) and leadership (consent) of Al Khalifa's rule. With the predominance of domination over leadership, the state of Bahrain was founded upon material bases overweighing ideological ones after 1975. This outcome shows one of two consequences of passive revolution in Gramsci's observation of the function of Piedmont in the Italian *Risorgimento*, which shows how some nuclei of ruling class perceived their role in the process of Bahrain's state formation:

They wished to 'dominate' and not to 'lead'. Furthermore, they wanted [the ruling class's] interest to dominate, rather than their persons; in other words, they wanted a new force, independent of every compromise and condition, to become the arbiter of the Nation: this force was Piedmont and hence the function of the monarchy.⁸⁶

It denotes that the state is strengthened to 'the detriment of civil society'⁸⁷, or that 'the state replaces class as the motor of socio-economic development'.⁸⁸ Conceived in

⁸⁵ Emphasis added. Thomas, 'Modernity as "Passive Revolution": Gramsci and the Fundamental Concepts of Historical Materialism', 74–75.

⁸⁶ Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 105.

⁸⁷ Carlos Nelson Coutinho, *Gramsci's Political Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 103.

⁸⁸ Christine Buci-Glucksmann, 'State, Transition and Passive Revolution', in *Gramsci and Marxist Theory*, ed. Chantal Mouffe (Oxfordshire and New York: Routledge, 2014), 219.

Gramsci's own terms,

...a State replaces the local social groups in leading a struggle of renewal. It is one of the cases in which these groups have the function of 'domination' without that of 'leadership': *dictatorship without hegemony*. The hegemony will be exercised by a part of the social group over the entire group, and not by the latter over other forces in order to give power to the movement, radicalise it, etc. on the 'Jacobin' model.⁸⁹

Following this passage, one of the characteristics of the concept of hegemony needs to be reiterated, as theoretically outlined in chapter 2. What Gramsci calls 'dictatorship without hegemony' does not imply that 'the state acting as the protagonist of a passive revolution can do without a minimum of consensus'.⁹⁰ Nor does it resonate with Perry Anderson's influential statement of the relation between consent and coercion as one of many antinomies of Gramsci.⁹¹ Rather, 'Gramsci's analysis [of consent and coercion] demonstrates in increasingly concrete and precise terms that their relationship can only be rationally comprehended as a dialectical one'.⁹² Therefore, as Gramsci himself puts it,

...the supremacy of a social group manifests itself in two ways: as 'domination' and as 'intellectual and moral leadership'. A social group dominates antagonistic groups, which it tends to 'liquidate, or to subjugate perhaps even by armed forces; it leads kindred and allied groups'.⁹³

This is the case with the period of the 1972 Constituent Assembly, the 1973 Parliament and the post-parliamentary phase in particular. While Al Khalifa continuously incorporated some old cadres of the ANM and other newly formed middle-classes into its political reforms, it also cracked down on popular and labour movements led by New Arab Left intellectuals in the street. Following the announcement of the new State Security Law and what the New Arab Left called 'the August onslaught', in which most members of the PFB and the NFL were sent to prison, the Amiri Decrees were issued to dissolve Parliament, suspend Article 65 of the Constitution and postpone

⁸⁹ Emphasis added. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 105–6.

⁹⁰ Coutinho, *Gramsci's Political Thought*, 104.

⁹¹ Perry Anderson, 'Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci', *New Left Review* 1/100 (1976).

⁹² Thomas, *The Gramscian Moment: Philosophy, Hegemony and Marxism*, 163.

⁹³ Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 57.

further elections with no definite timeframe.⁹⁴ Such a demonstration of the coercive power of Al Khalifa as a dominant class was self-evident in this series of events in August 1975. It then turned Al Khalifa's rule into dictatorship without hegemony, or a dominant class with non-equilibrium of coercion and consent.

5.4.3 *Floating national-popular collective will*

What does Al Khalifa's dictatorship without hegemony as an outcome of the process of passive revolution mean to the development of Arab nationalism? And what was its impact on Bahrain's policy towards regional alignment? These are the questions to which I now turn now, to conclude the present chapter, before proceeding to the next chapter on the investigation of Bahrain's regional policy, from its independence to the dilemma of forming an alignment with the US and its participation in the GCC.

While the dissolution of Parliament registered as an interrupted passive revolution and thus Al Khalifa's dictatorship without hegemony, the most significant implication for the development of Arab nationalism, I argue, was represented in Al Khalifa's ideological disconnection with the national-popular collective will fermenting in civil society. To help explicate my argument, it must refer back to Gramsci on two different types of ideology as already shown in chapter 2: willed ideology and organic ideology. The former, says Gramsci, are 'arbitrary, rationalistic' and creating individual 'movements', polemics and so on, whereas the latter, which resonates strongly with Gramsci on 'philosophy of praxis', are historically 'necessary to a given structure' for organising 'human masses, and creat[ing] the terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle, etc.'. ⁹⁵ In this regard, organic ideology is historically embedded within civil society and tied to the people, the subordinate classes in given social relations. Although such an organic ideology

⁹⁴ According to Article 65, 'the Amir may dissolve the National Assembly [i.e. the Parliament] by a decree in which the reasons for dissolution shall be indicated. However, dissolution of the Assembly may not be repeated for the same reason. In the event of dissolution, elections for the new Assembly shall be held within a period not exceeding two months from the date of dissolution. If the elections are not held within the said period, the dissolved Assembly shall be restored to its full constitutional authority and shall meet immediately as if the dissolution had not taken place. The Assembly shall then continue functioning until a new Assembly is elected'. See *Constitution of the State of Bahrain* in issued on May 26, 1973.

⁹⁵ Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 376–77.

might relate to a consciousness and world view for transforming the reality, they can also be consciousness ‘inherited from the past and uncritically absorbed’ or politically inert.⁹⁶ If the people and an organic ideology are interpellated by intellectuals or the State into ‘the political’ terrain, then an ideological congruency can be established between willed and organic ideologies that constitute an essential part of hegemony. It could be argued that this was the case for Arab nationalism in most Arab states prior to the late 1960s.

However, as presented in chapter 4, the ideological development of Arab nationalism split in response to the changes in geopolitics and capitalist formation in the 1960s. The left-leaning current turned radically and then incorporated Marxism-Leninism in light of the popular will as the foundation of Arab nationalism. While this ideological shift emerged, it also transformed some Arab nationalist into New Arab Left intellectuals as counter-hegemony. Thus, the relation of willed and organic elements of Arab nationalism was rearticulated after the late 1960s. Until the historical conjuncture of Bahrain’s formal independence and its subsequent passive revolution led by Al Khalifa and its allies, Arab nationalism as a whole was not a unified ideology ‘capable of representing the general interests of the whole ‘people-nation’’.⁹⁷ When Parliament was dissolved and the passive revolution was interrupted, Al Khalifa’s willed ideology through a colonial lens of a late-coming capitalist philosophy (corresponding to economic liberalism on the international scale) and a top-down approach to political reform still failed to represent it as a unified political project. In other words, Al Khalifa’s hegemony at this point was incomplete as the national-popular collective will was not yet organised by its leadership.

But who actually did organise such a national-popular collective will after 1975? And what were its components? From a joint statement made by the PFB, the NFL and the Ba’ath Socialist Party in October 1975, it could be argued that the national-popular collective will was yet to be organised, even by these counter-hegemonic forces that tried to rejuvenate it.⁹⁸ New Arab Left intellectuals also seemed to realise that their

⁹⁶ Gramsci, 333.

⁹⁷ Im, ‘Hegemony and Counter-Hegemony in Gramsci’, 132–33.

⁹⁸ The Gulf Committee, ‘The Gulf Bulletin No.10: The British Cop Who Rules Bahrain’, October 1977, 13–15, British Library.

leadership was undermined alongside Al Khalifa's crackdown. Unified counter-hegemonic forces around popular Arab nationalism, as noted in chapter 4, were fractured. As such, the PFB then called for a transformation in the movement 'from defensive to the offensive' in its statement issued in 1976. The PFB claimed that 'the fundamental contradictions lie in the contradiction between the people and its national democratic forces on the one hand, and imperialism and its reactionary allies on the other'. National unity must be achieved by abandoning 'subjectivism arising from considering joint work as a tactic not a strategy' and avoiding 'unilateral positions without consideration for the national interest as a whole'. Furthermore, from the experience of the failed Parliamentary experiment, the PFB urged adherence to popular movements and 'the mass revolutionary line', stating 'it is the people who make history'. The nationalist movement cannot 'substitute for the workers and mass movements, but it must be the vanguard of this movement, must lead its struggle and educate and organise it so that it can launch more struggles against the regime'. For the PFB, the lesson of disengagement from the people and misrepresentation of the working class should be learnt from the failure of Parliament. In practice, 'the struggle against political factions' thus needs to be undertaken and wielded as a weapon in a movement that can prevent the regime's tactics of polarisation of the masses⁹⁹.

While Al Khalifa's hegemony rested more on coercion than consent, and New Arab Left intellectuals suffered suppression and attempted to rebuild their leadership of counter-hegemony, the post-parliamentary phase after 1975 was characterised by a phase of floating national-popular collective will. The political struggle between counter-hegemonic and hegemonic forces within Bahrain was not resolved. Also, different social forces on the counter-hegemonic side found difficulties in establishing an alliance. These internal socio-political dynamics then created the social bases for Bahrain's policy towards regional alignment in the second half of the 1970s, leading to Al Khalifa's participation in the GCC in 1981.

⁹⁹ The People's Front in Bahrain, 'The Gulf Studies No.2: Bahrain, Service Boom and Class Struggle'.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to highlight the usefulness of the concept of passive revolution from Gramsci by examining a historical process, from Bahrain's formal independence to the dissolution of the first Bahraini parliament in 1975. In doing so, I first investigate the historical conjuncture of Bahrain's independence in 1971, putting this moment under the scrutiny of political economy analysis on the national, regional and international scales. Furthermore, I identify that passive revolution in Bahrain during this period was appropriated by what Hanieh calls the process of accumulation of *Khaleeji* capital. This process was the foundation upon which Al Khalifa initiated the process of historical restoration and incorporated newly-formed subaltern classes as its organic intellectuals linking to Bahraini society. However, due to the international pressure of capitalist formation and Al Khalifa's response to it, the historical process of passive revolution was interrupted in 1975, which turned the state of Bahrain into an incomplete hegemonic state. It characterised itself in that neither Al Khalifa and its allies nor New Arab Left intellectuals could organise a national-popular collective will. Although the analysis presented in this chapter mainly centres on the dimension of state formation, it has offered a different rationale from an eclecticist approach, as noted in chapter 1, which focuses on identity and state formation. By drawing on Gramsci's passive revolution, I also highlight how the struggle between hegemony and counter-hegemony in my analysis, and the role of New Arab Left intellectuals in particular, could advance our understanding of the ideological development of Arab nationalism and its interplay with Bahrain's state formation. Following the findings of the previous chapters and some characteristics of the incomplete hegemonic state of Bahrain noted in this chapter, the next chapter takes these characteristics as social bases upon which my analysis of Bahrain's policy towards regional alignment develops and proceeds with a historical investigation of a series of extended foreign policy issues in the 1970s.

6 BAHRAIN FROM INDEPENDENCE TO ALIGNMENT

This chapter investigates Bahrain's policy towards regional alignment from 1971 to 1981 by highlighting what internal socio-political dynamics drive the formation of alignment. The previous chapters have sought to examine the social bases of formation and evolution of Arab nationalism in Bahrain through the interrelated concepts of development, ideology and struggle in light of Gramsci as presented in chapter 2. The present chapter discusses how such an evolution set constraints and alternatives to the ways in which Arab nationalism influenced Bahrain's regional policy during this period. By drawing on Gramsci, I have elaborated on the emergence of different social forces around the rise of Arab nationalism in the British colonial era (discussed in chapter 3), the rise of the New Arab Left in the Gulf as a political leadership of counter-hegemonic forces for nationalist and popular movements in Bahrain (discussed in chapter 4) and the Al Khalifa regime's response to counter-hegemony through linking itself to the old cadres of the ANM and initiating the parliamentary experiment (discussed in chapter 5). This chapter further outlines the struggle between counter-hegemonic intellectuals and Al Khalifa in the 1970s, which explains Bahrain's policy towards regional alignment, especially its contentious alignment with the US and later participation in the establishment of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in 1981.

In doing so, I further illustrate the utility of Gramsci in examining the interplay of Arab nationalism and Bahrain's regional policy. Rather than seeing Al Khalifa's participation in the GCC as an outcome driven by the ideas of omni-balancing, economic integration or shared identity with others, I argue in this chapter that this alignment was intertwined with the struggles between popular movements and Al Khalifa and contingent to a series of extended foreign policy events. It can be seen as an alternative to Al Khalifa's open alignment with the US as well as a result of the regime's response to the continuously unresolved struggle within Bahraini society. The struggle was mainly underpinned by two different social forces: Al Khalifa and its organic intellectuals on the one hand, and the New Arab Left, its ad hoc allies and popular movements on the other. These polarised social forces in the struggle influenced the ideological development of Arab nationalism and how the regime

responded to a series of foreign policy issues in the 1970s, one notably being the US presence in Bahrain. This was a process mainly derived from the result of the failure to create a hegemonic state of Bahrain and related to Al Khalifa's responses to the national, regional and international socio-political dynamics. While the struggle remained within Bahraini society, Bahrain's regional policy was formulated in an ideological disconnection between the regime and civil society: a disconnection between will and organic ideology. For this, I further argue that, as this process proceeded, Arab nationalism was actually tied closely to the contestation of a sovereign subject – who should be the major political subject to represent Bahrain's sovereignty – rather than just Arab unity. Such a contestation was a clear representation of 'an incomplete hegemonic state of Bahrain' under Al Khalifa, as discussed in the previous chapter, and it then underlay Al Khalifa's dilemma in making alignments in the 1970s.

This chapter develops as follows. First of all, I outline the existing explanations of the genesis of the GCC, most of which revolve around the ideological challenge posed by the Iranian revolution in 1979. Against these explanations, I revisit this historical conjuncture in Gulf political development and ask: was the Iranian revolution a challenge to Al Khalifa? For this question, I offer an alternative historical explanation of it: The Iranian revolution was an opportunity for Al Khalifa to remain its 'dictatorship without hegemony' and corresponded to its continuous practice of using a British colonial lens on the ruling class's will ideology in Bahrain's regional policy. This seemingly controversial argument, which negates the common understanding of international relations in the Gulf, certainly needs to be further examined. Therefore, I conduct a historical investigation of a series of foreign policy issues. These issues centre around the presence of the US in the Gulf and the Iranian revolution. But some other associated events, such as the Palestinian question, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the non-alignment movement in the third world and the nascent development of the Iran-Iraq war, will be included. For most of these events, their impacts interrelated to different social forces around Arab nationalism within Bahrain in various ways and brought about contingent factors that influenced Al Khalifa's decision on alignment.

6.1 Genesis of the GCC as Alignment: Existing Understanding

In the past three decades, the study of international relations in the Gulf has been around the very reason for the establishment of the GCC and its impact on regional politics. The question of how and why collectiveness has been shown among Gulf Arab monarchies has received considerable scholarly research interest.

In IRME scholarship, some lenses have examined the question within a specific research agenda on security. Regarding the puzzle of this thesis on the role of Arab nationalism in explaining international relations in the Middle East, they appear to give a negative answer. The obvious implication in these analyses is that Gulf regional politics became turbulent after the early 1980s vis-à-vis its tranquillity in the 1970s following the 1967 *Naksa*. In politics, the Gulf States in the 1970s accepted the sovereignty and legitimacy of neighbouring states when ‘disputes over the domestic bases of political legitimacy among the regional states were muted ... the agenda pursued by these states was limited’.¹ What occupied the Gulf States’ concern at this time after the British withdrawal was not to change the status quo of the regional order but to consolidate their domestic authority with the resource of oil-wealth. To achieve this goal, these Gulf States initiated a series of cooperation arrangements among each other throughout the 1970s. For instance, the Gulf International Bank in 1975 and the Arab Gulf Organization for Industrial Consultancy in 1976 both include six monarchies and Iraq.² Regional cooperation of this kind restrained to a great extent potential inter-state conflict and brought the Gulf States’ attention to state developmental projects. It served as a tentative scheme and provided a basis for six Gulf Arab monarchies’ subsequent cooperation. However, since 1979, as Anoushiravan Ehteshami says, the Gulf saw that ‘*locality* surfaced and local power

¹ F. Gregory Gause III, *The International Relations of the Persian Gulf* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 42–43.

² Ayubi, *Over-Stating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East*, 153.

seized on the vacuum of power to magnify their own role and assert themselves' and 'the course of this formative period of *sub-regionalization*'.³

In these interpretations of the GCC, their underlying rationale is that the rupture in the evolution of Gulf politics was the outbreak of the Islamic revolution in Iran. It fundamentally changed the ideological foundations on which Gulf politics was reconstructed and recalibrated. It was a catalyst for a new security configuration that gave birth to the GCC and collectiveness among Arab monarchies in the Gulf. Most interpretations as such, however, neglect one side or the other of the historical process through which the Gulf states have gone. It falls into a dualistic debate, either between politics and economics or between ideational and material factors that drive international relations in the Gulf. These existing accounts of the genesis of the GCC are categorised into three different types of rationale: alliance for balancing threat, collaborative regime survival and regional norms.

6.1.1 Balancing threat and security

In a departure from a revised neo-realist standpoint, some scholars considered the genesis of the GCC to be the product of a state alliance against a common threat. Stephen Walt argues that the driving force behind the alliance is constituted less by ideology per se than by balancing ideological threats in a specific way. What ideology offers states is not solidarity but division, just like the ideological quarrel within the Pan-Arabist community.⁴ Ideology might influence state foreign policy, but it is usually fragile when states confront conflict by considering interests among others who share a similar ideology, like the decline in Pan-Arabism.⁵ In the case of the GCC, Walt identifies the GCC as an organisation led by Saudi Arabia, which is due to the perception of threat shared among member states and in order to balance 'potential pressure from both Iran and the Soviet Union'.⁶ For Walt, the implication of the Iranian revolution is to change the Gulf monarchies' perception of threat. As a result, it

³ Emphasis in original. Anoushiravan Ehteshami, *Dynamics of Change in the Persian Gulf Political Economy, War and Revolution* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 17.

⁴ Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, 181.

⁵ Walt, 214–15.

⁶ Walt, 270.

reshaped the security features of the Gulf and then generated regional unity on an ideological basis of common threat perceived by the monarchies.

Rather than identifying Iran as an external threat to the Gulf monarchies as Walt notes, David Priess maintains that a more compelling reason for the alliance among the GCC members was domestic subversion, an internal threat instigated by the Iranian revolution since 1979. As Priess says, 'the most severe threat to each of the Gulf regimes was the Iranian intent to undermine their security through aggressive pan-Islamic and anti-monarchical statements and subversion which led to demonstrations and violence'.⁷ These subversive elements triggered socio-political unrest, e.g. in Saudi Arabia's the Grand Mosque Seizure during *Haji* in 1979⁸, in Bahrain's coup led by the IFLB and allegedly supported by Iran, in Oman the Qaboos regime denounced by Iran for its support for Sadat's policy towards Israel and close relations with the US, and in Qatar pro-Khomeini demonstrations breaking out.⁹ In both of Walt's and Priess' accounts, how the perception of either an external or an internal threat influences regimes' decisions on alliances has been presented respectively. The catalyst for an alliance shifts from a classic neo-realist rationale of 'power' to 'threat' in their work. For Priess, internal threat was a significant causal factor leading to the Gulf monarchies' alliance decision. The GCC member states' major concern was domestic stability, which is as critical as the external challenge argued by Walt.

6.1.2 Collaborative regime survival

Regardless of its concerns over an internal or external threat in neo-realist accounts, others interpret the case of the GCC by taking a rather liberalist perspective. The GCC was formed as a multi-functional framework on which the regime survival relied for both security and economic incentives. As features of the economic and security dimension of the GCC, Ayubi argues that the GCC is the need for state

⁷ David Priess, 'Balance-of-Threat and the Genesis of the Gulf Cooperation Council: An Interpretative Case Study', *Security Studies* 5, no. 4 (1996): 170.

⁸ Even though this event was not due to the ideological convergence between itself and the Iranian revolution, Priess nonetheless argues that the Iranian revolutionary propaganda somehow encouraged the opposition forces within Saudi Arabia. For the discussion on the Grand Mosque Seizure, see Joseph A. Kechichian, 'Islamic Revivalism and Change in Saudi Arabia: Juhaymān Al-'Utaybī's "Letters" to the Saudi People', *The Muslim World* 80, no. 1 (1990): 1–16.

⁹ Priess, 'Balance-of-Threat and the Genesis of the Gulf Cooperation Council: An Interpretative Case Study', 162–67.

development and dealing with security vulnerabilities.¹⁰ On the one hand, the birth of the GCC, in fact, followed the regional multilateral cooperation in the 1970s for state developmental schemes and the economic future. The GCC, as a ‘piecemeal and functional’ organisation like the European Common Market, is rather than ‘comprehensive and ideological in the way that had characterised mot integration thinking among the Arabs in the 1950s and ‘60s’.¹¹ On the other hand, until 1981, six Gulf Arab monarchies sensed their security was vulnerable when the regional order began fluctuating after the Iranian revolution, the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. These reasons set the backdrop giving birth to the GCC. That is to say, the monarchies founded the GCC for instrumental purposes to deal with broad sociopolitical problems, not just for balancing an external threat in a rigid sense of state security.

Likewise, Scott Cooper sees the GCC as a ‘hybrid institution’ that ‘integrates security fear and real economic cooperation’, and its multi-functional features are designed to sustain regime survival.¹² As Cooper adds, ‘the key to understanding the GCC is that the greatest threat to member states was neither spill-over from the Iran-Iraq war nor Iranian invasion, but the spread of internal unrest’.¹³ For Cooper, the GCC states are at the intersection of national and interstate relations. When they confront dual environmental constraints, they can choose a variety of means to deal with both levels of threat. By sharing intelligence information among member states, Gulf monarchies protect themselves from potential internal subversion in advance. In the field of economic cooperation, via the United Economic Agreement and the Gulf Investment Corporation approved by the GCC, Gulf monarchies have been working on creating jobs, promoting trade and increasing state revenues, by which they placate the social dissent deriving from socio-economic issues. In addition to extracting material resources from the GCC, the principle of Arab unity and Islam enshrined in the GCC charter constitute the basis of Gulf unity, and validate their ruling

¹⁰ Ayubi, *Over-Stating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East*, 152.

¹¹ Ayubi, 155.

¹² Scott Cooper, ‘State-Centric Balance-of-Threat Theory: Explaining the Misunderstood Gulf Cooperation Council’, *Security Studies* 13, no. 2 (2003): 309.

¹³ Cooper, 310.

legitimacy.¹⁴ These measures, through external cooperation, were, above all, for counterbalancing Iranian revolutionary propaganda and potential social unrest.

6.1.3 *Regional norms and identity*

Going beyond the above accounts of the creation and needs of inter-state alliance and economic cooperation in the Gulf, the genesis of the GCC was also treated as a result of changing the political culture, norms and identity politics by constructivists. As Arshin Adib-Moghaddam argues, ‘between 1968 and 1978 [Gulf] states accentuated the role of diplomacy and outlawed the use of massive military force’, and this political culture cradled ‘legitimation complementary norms [that] were central to the consolidation of the regional society’.¹⁵ However, since 1979, Islamic Iran and Khomeinism have changed the Gulf’s political culture and norms qualitatively, stimulating the creation of the GCC founded upon a shared identity among Gulf monarchies. For Michael Barnett and F. Gregory Gause, this shared identity was constituted more specifically of the ‘tribal political structure’ and ‘Sunni Muslims’ that distinguished six Gulf Arab monarchies from other neighbouring republican states. It also set a threshold for GCC membership. Moreover, Gulf unity then gave rise to a common perception of other states, seeing Iran and Iraq as threats.¹⁶ Through this top-down approach, the Gulf monarchies benefited from the creation of a Gulf identity of stability for the Gulf monarchical regimes.¹⁷ As an ideational bond, it is expected to underline the collectiveness among Gulf monarchies that resist the common threat from Iran and Iraq, as well as to construct a cohesive identity binding state and society that prevents subversion ignited by Khomeinism and Pan-Arabism.

It is not difficult to find that ‘regime security’ does indeed lie at the heart of the primary concern of the GCC and constitutes one of the bricks building an ideological foundation for Gulf alignment. In other words, ideology as the initial driving force behind the GCC was bound up with security concerns and internal security in

¹⁴ Cooper, 334–41.

¹⁵ Adib-Moghaddam, *The International Politics of the Persian Gulf: A Cultural Genealogy*, 14.

¹⁶ Michael Barnett and F. Gregory Gause III, ‘Caravans in Opposite Directions: Society, State and the Development of Community in the Gulf Cooperation Council’, in *Security Communities*, ed. Emanuel Adler and Michael N. Barnett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 166–68.

¹⁷ Barnett and Gause III, 172.

particular. Even though an understanding of the GCC cannot rely solely on a materialist reading, as Priess once criticises, it is misleading to naively accept idealist accounts that the creation of the GCC was because of a shared identity among Gulf monarchies. 'Identity and ideas are as important as material power in driving international politics' but '[they] need to be instantiated in tangible and material forms'. In the case of the GCC, that is 'the form of overt threats to domestic regime stability, for them to play a major role in leaders' calculations about threat and alliances'.¹⁸ This common threat did give rise to Gulf monarchical unity and a common foreign policy orientation for the GCC states in response to the Iranian revolution. But the argument that the Iranian revolution catalysed an overarching ideological context, constituted by Khomeinism, for the Gulf monarchies' regional policy has been overstated in existing explanations, as shown above. And for a long time, it has been founded uncritically on a presumption, widely accepted by academics and rooted in a vernacular understanding of Gulf politics: in any case, the Iranian revolution was a challenge, and it was all about regime security.

In the case of Bahrain, alignment issues surely related to regime security like its other neighbours, and more broadly like most authoritarian regimes in the Middle East. But there are more nuances to be added to the current wisdom. This reflection leads us to a conceptual question and helps revisit the sociological and historical underpinnings of Bahrain's alignment: if the Iranian revolution was not a challenge to Al Khalifa, could it have been an opportunity instead? If it was an opportunity, how does one understand Al Khalifa's decision on its participation in the GCC? And how does the case of Bahrain help to solve the puzzle of this thesis? My tentative answer thus far is that although the ideological upheaval due to the Iranian revolution was threat, it was rather an opportunity than a challenge for the Al Khalifa regime. Considering the socio-political context from which popular movements derived and to which Al Khalifa responded, the Iranian revolution was a favourable juncture for forming Bahrain's policy towards regional alignment. This tentative argument does not, of

¹⁸ F. Gregory Gause III, 'Balancing What? Threat Perception and Alliance Choice in the Gulf', *Security Studies* 13, no. 2 (2003): 303.

course, prove its validity unless it is justified by further empirical explanations. This is the task to which this chapter now turns.

6.2 Missing Piece in the Puzzle: Sovereignty in Contestation

What is left by the above existing explanation of the genesis of the GCC or the rationale of the Gulf Arab states' participation in it? What is the difference between these explanations and the alternative one this thesis proposes? And how does this thesis solve the puzzle – the role of Arab nationalism in international relations in the Middle East in the post-1967 phase – through an alternative account given for the case of Bahrain and Gulf alignment? My answers to these questions are offered by addressing the contestation of sovereignty and its ideological ties to Arab nationalism.

In the existing understanding, especially that of IR constructivism noted in this thesis, Arab nationalism has been considered as an alternative, or contradictory, parochial regional norm to a more universal and institutionalised one of sovereignty. A divergent political connotation is that the former pursued the norm of Arab unity beyond state boundaries, but the latter that of 'defining the territorial and sovereign basis of [Arab leaders'] authority and power'¹⁹. However, in the case of Bahrain, such a dichotomous reading of Arab nationalism and sovereignty might not be legitimate. Nor is their relationship as contradictory as IR constructivists might argue. For this, I contend that the analytical locus is not about the 'norm' of sovereignty but about its 'subject'. The contestation does not lie at the norm per se but with who represents the major political subject of a modern sovereign state. Such contestation, as already shown in previous chapters, was constantly represented in Bahraini popular and nationalist movements since the 1950s and '60s and throughout the 1970s. Despite envisaging Arab unity as the ultimate goal, Bahraini Arab nationalists seemed not to fundamentally reject the norm of sovereignty, nor did a more radical current of the New Arab Left. In other words, their revolutionary and utopian reading of Arab nationalism was not to wipe out the norm of sovereignty. Instead, it was to contest a sovereign subject through a political struggle against the existing authority and the

¹⁹ Barnett, *Dialogue in Arab Politics: Negotiation in Regional Order*, 31.

social basis of its rule: a contested sovereign subject that had been granted by a colonial authority to the regime in the British protectorate era and has been represented by Al Khalifa even after Bahrain's formal independence.

To highlight such contested sovereign subject is important to my analyses of Bahrain's policy towards regional alignment and its interplay with Arab nationalism. Following the previous chapter on Al Khalifa's interrupted historical restoration, I have argued that the political struggle between Al Khalifa and Bahraini civil society was not resolved with the dissolution of Parliament in 1975. While such a political struggle continued and Al Khalifa's ideological disconnection from the people remained, a national-popular collective will was not yet organised around Arab nationalism. Nor had it become an ideological foundation of Bahrain's sovereignty, which appeared at this point to be only based on Al Khalifa's will rather than the people's will. As such, the political struggle had a continuous ideological impact on Bahrain's regional policy after independence. If there was a claim that state regional policy was pursuing general national interests, it could be contested in such a context, not least when it came to the highly contentious issue of forming an alignment with the US. As Abdulnabi Al-Ekry recalls:

When the new Parliament came [in 1973], of course, they [Al Khalifa and its allies] ... want[ed] this agreement [with the US] to be available to Parliament... [However,] the army and the government refused saying that this is *a sovereign issue* decided before Parliament and [Al Khalifa] will not bring it to Parliament.²⁰

Al Khalifa's alignment with the US became the most contentious foreign policy issue throughout the 1970s. It reflected the contestation of Bahrain's sovereignty between Al Khalifa and the Bahraini people. Furthermore, it was also related more broadly to Bahrain's policy towards the Palestinian question, the Iranian Revolution and the Iran-Iraq war, to which the chapter now turns.

²⁰ Emphasis added. Interview with Abdulnabi Al-Ekry, *Manama*, November 29, 2015.

6.3 US Presence in the Gulf

In December 1971, soon after Bahrain attained formal independence in August, the Al Khalifa regime agreed to lease the previously British-held naval base in *Juffair* to the US. This agreement registered a new era for US military and political influence in the Gulf, but through an alternative conduit to its British predecessor. More importantly, it was born in a contentious context, later developed along with the struggle in Bahrain and related to the Palestinian question.

6.3.1 *The question of Juffair*

Following the announcement by Harold Willson's Labour government in 1968 that Britain would withdraw from East of Suez by the end of 1971, the US delivered its regional strategic framework, the Nixon Doctrine, in July 1969. The US could have been adhering to its grand strategy of containing and counter-balancing the Soviet Union in the Cold War. But, Nixon's new strategy of 'opening to China and détente with the Soviet Union' through international cooperation somehow changed the ties between the US and its traditional allies in the Middle East. It gave up US direct military intervention in regional conflict. And it asked for more responsibility from US regional allies to set the front line against the spread of communism but promised to offer sufficient military aid to them. As a result, the twin-pillar policy evolved as the US's principle policy in the Gulf. The policy supported two monarchies – Saudi Arabia and the Shah's Iran – in maintaining regional stability with 'credible local policemen'²¹. The US naval base in *Juffair*, in the southeastern corner of *Manama*, then became part of the twin-pillar policy. Although Al Khalifa was desperate for a powerful external ally that could fill the power vacuum left by Britain, the question of *Juffair* was indeed a contentious foreign policy issue and dilemma for the regime.

What mainly constituted Al Khalifa's dilemma of approaching the US came from the objection of the counter-hegemonic forces of the New Arab Left and its ad hoc allies the People's and Religious blocs in the 1973 Parliament. For these forces, the US presence at *Juffair* was a legacy of colonialism and neo-imperialism that

²¹ Peterson, *Anglo-American Policy toward the Persian Gulf, 1978-1985: Power, Influence and Restraint*, 8–9.

corresponded to a grand scheme of counter-insurgency attempted by the US. It impeded Bahraini people from pursuing popular sovereignty and retained Al Khalifa's privileges within the broader geopolitical and capitalist competition of the Cold War confrontation. While the US-Bahraini agreement had been discussed secretly on the eve of independence, to the New Arab Left it was a breach of the will of the Bahraini people, turning the Gulf into another version of the 'Vietnamization' of the US war on communism.

In such a contentious context, why was Al Khalifa still so desperate to keep a US presence onshore? The reasons that follow offer an alternative account and some nuances to the existing explanation, as noted earlier. The rationale concerning how Al Khalifa dealt with the issue of the US presence was beyond the effect of omni-balancing, balancing the internal and external threat. This decision was an alternative arrangement among various options of security proposals that implicated the contradictions among different social forces. The first option was proposed by Kuwait. In response to the British withdrawal, the Kuwaiti newspaper *An Nahda* reported in May 1970 that Kuwait was ready to 'give Bahrain military token aid' by sending a Kuwaiti Air Force squadron to Bahrain, and this idea had been circulated among Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Bahrain according to the observations of British diplomats to Bahrain.²² For Bahrain, when the scheme for a nine-shaikhdom federation was still up in the air, the Kuwaiti proposal could have opened up an opportunity for Al Khalifa to have an ally. But while the British government thought that 'the excellent defence facilities at Bahrain' were supposed to be the pillar of the future federation scheme, Al Khalifa gave an ambiguous response to the Kuwaiti proposal under pressure from Britain.²³ Al Khalifa was then open to any possible security cooperation with other Gulf monarchies beyond an exclusively bilateral deal. In fact, according to Alexander Sterling, British Ambassador to Bahrain in 1970:

Shaikh Khalifa [Bahraini Prime Minister] confirmed that the Kuwaiti Government has asked to lease the [British] RAF installations at *Muharraq* after the British withdrawal. [He] said that the Bahrain Government had stalled on this partly because [the] Kuwaiti plans were ... directed primarily...[at]

²² Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/1377 Kuwait Forces in Bahrain', 1970, British National Archives.

²³ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/1377 Kuwait Forces in Bahrain', May 27, 1970.

defending themselves rather than Bahrain and also because Bahrain was looking for solid support on the military side. The Bahrain Government hoped that this would be provided by [Her Majesty's Government] since, whatever the merits of cooperation with Kuwait, their military support would be useless ... Shaikh Khalifa [further] added that the Bahrain Government had also been reluctant to come to an arrangement with Kuwait because they believed that if the Kuwaitis were given facilities Saudi Arabia would demand them as well. Bahrain would find this difficult to refuse...²⁴

Al Khalifa did not trust Kuwaiti military ability and was suspicious about whether Kuwaiti would kindly protect Bahrain or defend itself; moreover, Al Khalifa had no intention to irritate Saudi Arabia for giving exclusive privileges to Kuwait. These reasons made seeking Kuwaiti military support difficult. The second option was an independent Bahraini military force, the Bahrain Defence Force (BDF). Initially, it was also created in response to the British withdrawal. To Britain and Al Khalifa, however, BDF might be also reminiscent of a possible military coup in the 1950s and 1960s once planned by radical Arabists,²⁵ let alone its unfledged military capability to defend against external threats. All of these reasons and developments seem to single out the US presence at *Juffair* as a more favourable option.

Since the *Juffair* agreement was signed in December 1971, Al Khalifa was keeping a very low profile within Bahrain and attempted to dilute public suspicion by deemphasizing 'the political implications of the agreement'.²⁶ Nonetheless, the question of *Juffair* still remained a primary issue in the 1973 Parliament, around which the development of the political struggle was centred, and via which the New Arab Left mobilised their popular support and coordinated with their ad hoc allies with different ideological backgrounds. It was conceived as a sovereignty issue concerning whether the Bahraini people could be the principle political subject able to shake off the colonial fetters. Furthermore, it was also a sovereignty issue around which a collective national-popular will was organised and via which counter-hegemonic intellectuals highlighted an essential part of a popular version of Arab nationalism. Therefore, the question of *Juffair* was never just a national security issue. It represented the political struggle between the people and the regime within Bahrain.

²⁴ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/1377 Kuwait Forces in Bahrain', September 1, 1970.

²⁵ In 1970, a subversive cell was found with in BDF. See Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/1639 Political Situation in Bahrain'.

²⁶ Nakhleh, *Bahrain: Political Development in a Modernizing Society*, 113.

Moreover, it was also related to a broader regional context in which popular Arab nationalism emerged as a counter-hegemonic social force informed by Marxism-Leninism. Within this context, the question of *Juffair*, or the issue of Bahrain's alignment with the US, then resonated with popular movements against imperialism across the Middle East, particularly the Palestinian question.

6.3.2 *Ties to the Arab cause*

The Palestinian question undoubtedly lies in the most inalienable part of Arab nationalism. Drawing from the sources of anti-imperialism and anti-Zionism, the ideological mainstay of the Arab cause has motivated the course of Palestinian liberation. For some IR constructivist understanding, it has also designated a normative framework for Arab states, orienting their foreign policy. Within this framework, Arab states' alignment with the US, if successful, can be seen as a result of a normative shift between two seemingly conflicting norms, Arab nationalism versus modern sovereignty. However, an investigation of Al Khalifa's attempted alignment with the US demonstrates different sociological connotations of the Arab cause and the role of Arab nationalism in state foreign policy. As I will argue in the following sections, the ideological linkage between the question of *Juffair* and the Arab cause posed a dilemma for the Al Khalifa regime. But the national, regional and international dynamics in the 1970s nonetheless changed the implications of the Arab cause for Gulf politics and its ties to Arab nationalism. Along with this course on the ideological level, Al Khalifa gradually detached the Arab cause from the question of *Juffair* while seeking an alternative option to its alignment with the US.

To Al Khalifa, it had been realistic to remain aloof from the Arab cause before 1970. While much discourse on the Palestinian question had been revolving around Nasserism, an element of it could have brought sociopolitical change to Bahrain in a revolutionary fashion. Therefore, it could be argued that, in the 1967 war, Bahrain and other Gulf Arab states played no influential part.²⁷ However, as a newly independent Arab state since 1971 in the post-Nasserism era, it seemed that Al Khalifa had no legitimate reasons for not dedicating to the Arab cause, let alone the pressure from the

²⁷ Uzi Rabi and Chelsi Mueller, 'The Gulf Arab States and Israel since 1967: From "No Negotiation" to Tacit Cooperation', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 44, no. 4 (2017): 576.

New Arab Left that had strong ties to Palestinian migrant workers within Bahraini society. When Anwar Sadat's de-Nasserisation followed the defeat of the 1967 war from the early 1970s, this 'correctiveness' alleviated the confrontation between Egypt and the Gulf Arab monarchies through reconstruction of the regional political and economic ties between them.²⁸ In this context, the Palestinian question was approached by Al Khalifa via cooperation among the Arab states in accordance with the principles of the Arab League and the United Nations. Meanwhile, Al Khalifa joined the non-alignment movement in 1972. These decisions, on the one hand, alleviated the tension within Bahraini society concerning the question of *Juffair*, and on the other hand this platform allowed Al Khalifa to air its voice in support of the Arab cause in the international arena. Al Khalifa's seemingly determined stance towards the Arab cause was also shown in the Ramadan War in October 1973, when compared to its reaction 'in a much more muted manner to the 1967 war'.²⁹ Ten days after the war broke out, Bahrain joined other Gulf Arab states and Iran in a decision to raise the price of crude oil by 70 per cent. As historian Rosemarie Said Zahlan argues, 'it was during this war that the linkage between the Gulf and the Palestinian problem rose to the surface and dominated affairs for several months'.³⁰ And this linkage then opened up a conduit through which Al Khalifa engaged in the Arab cause under Saudi leadership and away from the more revolutionary approach of popular Arab nationalism.

While Al Khalifa 'committed' itself to the Arab cause, its efforts nonetheless seemed not to pay off in diverting popular movements from heading towards radical intent. With the victory of the Left in the parliamentary election in December 1973, two months later Bahrain's participation in the oil boycott, the regime's fear and suspicion of the New Arab Left did not fade away throughout the following sessions of Parliament in 1974 and 1975. To a certain extent, Al Khalifa's political commitment to the Arab cause was just paying lip service in the international arena. Compared to improving the relationship with neighbours in the Gulf, the Palestinian question was

²⁸ Stein, *Representing Israel in Modern Egypt: Ideas, Intellectuals and Foreign Policy from Nasser to Mubarak*, 125–26.

²⁹ Rosemarie Said Zahlan, *Palestine and the Gulf States: The Presence at the Table* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 42.

³⁰ Said Zahlan, 53.

somehow a marginal one on Al Khalifa's political agenda³¹. In the heyday of the New Arab Left, Bahraini popular and labour movements had revolutionary ties with the Palestinian community in Bahrain. The ideological power allowing Al Khalifa to form policy on the Palestinian question was hardly drawing from an ideological cohesiveness linked to civil society. This gave Al Khalifa no choice but to rely externally on consensus among regional Arab states.³² To conceive Arab nationalism in support of the Arab cause in this way gave Al Khalifa an opportunity to engage with the Palestinian question. Also, it attempted to divert it from an overarching agenda brought up by popular movements, which included abolition of the US naval base in *Juffair* as part of an expression of solidarity with the Palestinian people. This approach offered more latitude for Al Khalifa when dealing with the question of *Juffair* separately from the Arab cause. Therefore, when the question of *Juffair* later became a trigger for terminating the parliamentary experiment, Al Khalifa legitimised its commitment to the Arab cause through regional and international frameworks.

However, Al Khalifa's support for the Arab cause through external frameworks was faced with challenges when Anwar Sadat made his agreement with Israel at Camp David in 1978. In July 1977, Al Khalifa announced its intention to cancel the agreement with the US whereby the US Navy would reduce its presence and no longer use military facilities in *Juffair*. But, the US military presence was still there. When the Camp David agreement was made between Egypt and Israel, the question of *Juffair* was rising to the surface again. With Sadat's aggressive and unilateral move, the challenge to Al Khalifa now was to seek an alternative and reliable external framework for its policy towards the Arab cause. This challenge was then followed by Al Khalifa's reconfirmation of its rationale for dealing with the Palestinian question. Al Khalifa criticised the Egypt-Israel agreement, especially the US for 'no longer being a

³¹ As Robert Tesh noted in August 1972 after a meeting with Shaikh Khalifa bin Sulman, Bahraini Prime Minister: 'what matters to Shaikh Khalifa is how to keep '[his] little country' going, which means very largely his relations with his immediate neighbours in the Gulf'. See Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/1822 Political Situation in Bahrain'.

³² When the office of Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) was open in mid-1974, Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak, Bahraini Foreign Minister, felt hard to 'refuse to fall in line with the rest of the Arab World'. This decision was also assured by the Secret Service's word that the PLO office in Bahrain would not be involved in subversion. See Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/2182 Activities of Palestine Liberation Organisation in Bahrain', 1974, British National Archives.

reliable friend'.³³ In calling for 'a just and lasting solution' that would ensure the return of occupied Arab territories and 'recognise the legal rights of the Palestinians', Al Khalifa reiterated the significance of stability and security in the oil-producing Gulf and Middle East order.³⁴ It kept representing itself as a 'moderate Arab' state that would not take 'the stand of the Steadfastness Front', like Libya, Algeria, Syria, South Yemen and the PLO.³⁵ At the same time, it also sought international cooperation on the Palestinian question through non-alignment summits; however, the non-aligned states did not give much substantial support to the Arab cause. For the majority of these states, their concern with the Palestinian question was about the occupied territories from the 1967 war, but not 'recognition of Israeli's existence with the 1967 pre-war lines of control as a de facto boundary, subject to negotiated adjustment necessitated by security considerations'.³⁶ In a sense, there was inconsistency between the non-alignment movement and the Khartoum Resolution of the Arab League after the 1967 war with regard to the Three Nos – no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel and no negotiations with Israel. Additionally, according to a telegram from Harold Walker, British Ambassador to Bahrain in 1979, on the report of what Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak, Bahraini Foreign Minister, thought about the summits of the non-alignment movement, the movement was 'heavily weighted in favour of the Soviet Union'.³⁷

The above messages reflected Al Khalifa's fear and dilemma in keeping the US alignment and making a commitment to the Arab cause at the same time. For Shaikh Mohammed, the deadlock over the Palestinian question, between polarised social forces taking different approaches, might trigger a proxy war in the third world and bring changes to 'legitimate regimes in some other states'³⁸. Even though Al Khalifa's coercive measure of suppressing popular movements in Bahrain continued throughout the 1970s, the deadlock over the Palestinian question might once again aggravate the

³³ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/3308 Bahrain External Relations', 1979, British National Archives.

³⁴ *Reuter*, June 12, 1978, Bahrain Fiche, AWDU, Exeter University.

³⁵ *Gulf Mirror*, September 29, 1978, Bahrain Fiche, AWDU, Exeter University.

³⁶ Rikhi Jaipal, *Non-Alignment: Origins, Growth and Potential for World Peace* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers Private Limited, 1983), 113.

³⁷ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/3308 Bahrain External Relations'.

³⁸ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/3308 Bahrain External Relations', October 20, 1979.

political struggle within Bahrain. Furthermore, it might motivate another wave of popular movements criticising the alignment between Bahrain and the US. Hence, Al Khalifa attempted to deliver a message to the US: Bahrain would not take a radical approach to the Arab cause, but Gulf security would be under threat if the radicals prevailed. In doing so, Al Khalifa turned to the British Conservative government that, as Shaikh Isa bin Sulman, Bahraini Amir, saw it, shared more sympathy with Al Khalifa's thoughts about the Arab cause than did the Labour party.³⁹ It asked a favour from the British government, to persuade the US to change its pro-Israel stance, given the relation between Gulf stability and Western interests. For, as Bahraini Foreign Minister commented,

...the regime[s] in the Gulf were vulnerable. Sooner or later one of them would fall to this pressure [from Iraq and Syria,] and a chain reaction would... [be triggered]. The only way in which the pressure could be relieved was to get progress over Palestine.⁴⁰

Nonetheless, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 could have turned Al Khalifa's dilemma into an opportunity, especially after the announcement of the Carter Doctrine in January 1980 that shifted Nixon's passiveness in US policy towards the Gulf into something more active.⁴¹ But the dilemma remained, no matter how much effort Al Khalifa put in, constantly sending a message to the US that: the threat from the Left was more important than taking a side on the Palestinian question as it was related to the security of moderate Arab states in the oil-producing Gulf region. To Al Khalifa, since there have always been divergent views between the regime and the people on the Palestinian question and the US role in the area,⁴² the dilemma would continue if the US remained partial. In seeking US support against Soviet ambitions in such a dilemma, Al Khalifa was forced to find alternative legitimisation for Bahrain's

³⁹ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/3308 Bahrain External Relations', July 31, 1979.

⁴⁰ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/3308 Bahrain External Relations', October 5, 1979.

⁴¹ In his State of Union Speech on 23 January 1980, US President Jimmy Carter addressed: 'An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force'. See Jimmy Carter, State of the Union Address, 23 January 1980, accessed at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=33079>, 1 May 2017.

⁴² In a conversation between a British diplomat and Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak, Bahraini Foreign Minister, the Minister said: 'if you asked the Arab people which they considered the bigger threat as between the USSR on the one hand and Israel and its US backer on the other, ninety-five per cent would say the later'. See Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/3493 Bahrain External Relations'.

alignment. As a result, the Islamic Conference at Islamabad in May 1980 and the ongoing talks on Gulf security cooperation then became alternatives. Moreover, alongside the sociopolitical fallout of the Iranian revolution within and outside Bahrain, these contingent options paved Al Khalifa's road to the GCC.

6.4 Iranian Revolution: Challenge or Opportunity?

The Iranian revolution in 1979 marked a historical juncture for the geopolitical, societal and ideological development of different social forces in the Gulf. It changed a geopolitical landscape designed by the US's twin-pillar policy and infused new revolutionary momentum into popular movements in societies across the Gulf and beyond. While the principles of 'neither West nor East' and 'universal Islamism' were represented in Khomeinism and Iranian territorial claim on Bahrain revived, the Iranian revolution gave birth to alternative counter-hegemonic forces of Bahraini Khomeinists to the New Arab Left in the 1970s and its impact on Bahraini politics was shown in changing Al Khalifa's relations with some Shia groups.

6.4.1 Khomeini's universal Islamism

The theoretical basis of Khomeinism was a revision of Shia political thought and could only be found in the social, political, economic and cultural dynamics of modern Iran.⁴³ Khomeinism was a distinct form of modern fundamentalism that did not merely represent itself as a legacy of Islamic political traditions, its departure showing that the 'modern Islamic group are operating ideologically and politically within the context of the modern nation-state and the political concepts related to it'.⁴⁴ 'The Islamic character of the Iranian revolution did not arise from the religious worldviews of particular social classes, but from the peculiar historical position of the religious institutions in Iran'.⁴⁵ Resonating with what Kamran Matin argues, this position was as a result of the combination and infusion of European republicanism and the notion

⁴³ Amineh and Eisenstadt, 'The Iranian Revolution: The Multiple Contexts of the Iranian Revolution', 134.

⁴⁴ Sami Zubaida, *Islam, the People and the State: Political Ideas and Movements in the Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), 3.

⁴⁵ Zubaida, 80.

of '*velayat-e faqih*' by counter-hegemonic intellectuals like Ali Shariati and Khomeini.⁴⁶ At this revolutionary movement, 'the people' were once again interpellated as the political subjects for sovereignty, yet under Shia religious leadership.

Going beyond calling for a return to the Islamic golden age, as former fundamentalists did, Khomeinism also included critiques of challenges to the established international and regional socio-political relations, dominated by the US and its monarchical allies and demarcated by two superpowers. To a considerable extent, Khomeinism, as previously argued in chapter 4, shared some ideological affinities with the New Arab Left and represented itself as a permanent Islamic revolutionary paradigm. Khomeinism rejected the contemporary international order, originating from the Westphalian system of nation-states, and abandoned the binary world views propagandised by either liberalism or communism in the Cold War context. What Khomeinism was calling for was a world of Islamic universalism by which the oppressed continued their political struggle against 'satanic' powers and their lackeys and realised the establishment of a global Islamic government.⁴⁷ As such, Khomeini made his criticisms of communism without reserve on different occasions. In his speech on the eve of the Iranian New Year in March 1980, Khomeini attacked both East and West, as shown below:

We are fighting against international communism to the same degree that we are fighting against the Western world – devourers led by America, Israel and Zionism ... Both superpowers have risen for the obliteration of the oppressed nations and we should support the oppressed people of the world.⁴⁸

To carry on the universal revolutionary goal, Khomeini expanded the social bases of his support beyond the religious networks. Not only did Khomeini attempt to exert his influence on non-Iranian Shias through the traditional networks and among the clergy, but also emerging radical Shia movements and younger mullahs became another

⁴⁶ Matin, *Recasting Iranian Modernity: International Relations and Social Change*, 141.

⁴⁷ Ramazani, 'Khumayni's Islamic in Iran's Foreign Policy', 16–18.

⁴⁸ Ayatollah Khomeini's speech on March 21, 1980, quoted from 'Khomeini: 'We shall confront the world with our ideology'', *MERIP Reports*, June 1980, p.22.

central conduit.⁴⁹ Also, Iranian youth and diplomats were seen as significant to support exporting revolution.⁵⁰ Khomeini's mobilisation of these networks to achieve his goal of exporting revolution represented his understanding of the international and regional order. This was fundamentally different from the Shah's intimate ties with the US in maintaining Iran's regional primacy and alleviating a potential clash with the Gulf Arab states under the Nixon Doctrine. As R. K. Ramazani notes, 'Khomeini's views about government and international politics in general and his conception of the requirements of security in the Persian Gulf in particular make it mandatory for Iran to export its Islamic revolution.'⁵¹ As a result, the way in which Khomeini called for exporting revolution through intellectual networks became the mainstay of Iranian foreign policy after 1979.

How does this Khomeinist revolutionary moment relate to our discussion on forming Bahrain's alignment, especially with the GCC, and different social forces around the development of Arab nationalism? As previously argued, most current understandings see the Iranian revolution as a security threat and thus a challenge to the ruling status of Gulf Arab monarchies. It created a geopolitical and ideological crisis for Gulf Arab monarchies and thus led directly to the formation of the GCC. But in conducting an investigation into Bahraini domestic political dynamics, as already shown in chapters 4 and 5, along with Al Khalifa's response to a series of events following the Iranian revolution, I argue that the Iranian revolution, though a threat, might not have been a challenge to Al Khalifa. Instead, while Al Khalifa faced an internal political struggle, the Iranian revolution created a favourable historical moment for finding alternative alignment options to one with the US. While the revolution offered a way out of the dilemma of Al Khalifa's alignment, Al Khalifa continued its 'dictatorship without hegemony' without a national-popular collective will being organised between itself and civil society.

⁴⁹ Roy Oliver, 'The Impact of the Iranian Revolution on the Middle East', in *The Shi'a Worlds and Iran*, ed. Sabrina Mervin (London: Saqi Books, 2010), 34.

⁵⁰ Ramazani, 'Khomeini's Islam in Iran's Foreign Policy', 19.

⁵¹ R.K. Ramazani, *Revolutionary Iran: Challenge and Response in the Middle East* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1986), 35.

6.4.2 *Shia demands and Iranian territorial claim*

Around the issue of the State Security Law and the question of *Juffair*, ad hoc unified counter-hegemonic forces across ideological terrains within Bahrain were created. As shown in previous chapters, these ad hoc unified forces were organised in the 1973 Parliament and evolved with the outcome being the dissolution of Parliament and Al Khalifa failing to establish its ideological linkage to civil society. While the Iranian revolution broke out and received support from the New Arab Left, concerning the shared objectives of toppling the monarchies and the US-dominated regional order, the political struggle between civil society and the regime was not new. It was somehow the residue of an interrupted passive revolution from 1975 that, to Al Khalifa, could be taken advantage of by the New Arab Left again if a revolutionary moment came. In this regard, although the Iranian revolution came as a shock, it was not an absolute challenge to Al Khalifa and its Arab neighbours due to the essential difference in religious and national identity. Instead, the impact of the Iranian revolution and its consequence of leading to Al Khalifa's decision on alignment mirrored more complicated socio-political dynamics. That is, the interplay of the regime's response with the internal political struggle and geopolitical and capitalist surroundings played a significant role in the course of Al Khalifa's alignment.

The Iranian revolution could have given Al Khalifa another chance to link itself ideologically to civil society through some conservative-minded Shia clerics. Under its objective of anti-insurgency of the Left, Al Khalifa appeared to continue with its tactic of making deals with them and undermining the New Arab Left's leadership in popular movements. In the first few months of Iranian President Mehdi Bazargan's provisional government after February 1979, Al Khalifa and other Gulf Arab monarchies were not very suspicious of the religious aspects brought about by the revolution. Although suspicions came with the fall of one of Nixon's pillars in the Gulf, Al Khalifa maintained a rather good relationship with Iran after the Shah fled. On the one hand, they were on the same page of preventing the Left from taking the political leadership in the post-revolutionary phase; on the other hand, they agreed to create a

regional order without any external intervention.⁵²

But history was nonetheless leading the whole development along another path. On 16 June, Ayatollah Mohammad Sadeq Rouhani of Qom, one of the key Shia clerics against the Shah, announced that Iran should reclaim Bahrain as part of its territory ‘if the Arabs did not abandon their claim for the return of the Tunbs and Abu Musa’. Rouhani’s announcement was later reiterated by the Nationalist Iranian Party that negated Bahrain’s independence referendum in the early 1970s. In spite of the statement issued by the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs that Rouhani’s views were personal and did not reflect official Iranian policy, Al Khalifa’s nervousness about Iranian ambitions remained. This was shown in an article, denouncing Iran’s ‘irresponsible statements and an unacceptable position’, published by a local pro-government Bahraini newspaper, *Akhbar Al-Khaleej* (Gulf Daily).⁵³ Al Khalifa’s suspicions were proven legitimate when the Bahraini Shia community responded to the Iranian revolution. A group of Shia clerics distributed leaflets and demanded socio-political reform in July 1979, aiming to turn Bahrain into an Islamic state.⁵⁴ A Shia-led demonstration marched from *Manama suq* to the PLO office in support of Khomeini’s call for ‘the recovery of Jerusalem’ from Zionist Israel in August.⁵⁵ With the notion of ‘*velayat-e faqih*’ received seemingly well among Bahraini radical Shia activists, the *Shirazyin* faction, Al Khalifa held back from responding positively to the Shia community. In spite of retaining its ideological disconnection from civil society, Al Khalifa found that Rouhani’s statement and the rise of Bahraini Khomeinism could be an opportunity to demolish united popular forces. The Bahraini Foreign Minister told Harold Walker, the British Ambassador to Bahrain, that when the political aspects of the Iranian revolution reveal far more than its religious ones,

⁵² For the initial rapprochement among the Gulf states following the breakout of Iranian revolution in early 1979, see chapter 3 in Christin Marschall, *Iran’s Persian Gulf Policy: From Khomeini to Khatami* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).

⁵³ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, ‘FCO 8/3308 Bahrain External Relations’.

⁵⁴ These demands included the application of the Islamic system in the country’s system of rule, separation of males and females in medical attention and school, alcohol forbidden in companies, hotels and cafes, the information media to be cleansed in accordance with Islamic principles, the subject of religion to be concentrated on in schools, women to be obliged to wear respectable clothes in public places, public moral police to be present, and the teaching of music in schools to be forbidden. See Foreign and Commonwealth Office, ‘FCO 8/3307 Internal Situation in Bahrain’, 1979, British National Archives.

⁵⁵ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, ‘FCO 8/3307 Internal Situation in Bahrain’, August 18, 1979.

...the extremes to which Khomeini's puritanism was going had also been of help to the Bahraini authorities: *the people in the villages* would like to see that sort of thing but [Khomeinism] would get no support from *the people in the towns*.⁵⁶

Such a message showed that Al Khalifa seemed to have enough confidence to retrieve its support from urban areas, which was lost in the 1973 Parliament. Moreover, the most important implication from these events was that the emergence of the Khomeinist movement in Bahrain, like the later political action led by the IFLB in December 1981, nonetheless had disadvantages for the unified social forces of popular movements. Bahraini Khomeinists attempted to establish their leadership and counter-hegemonic forces and carried on the New Arab Left's revolutionary legacy. But their allegiance to Khomeini nonetheless distinguished themselves from their revolutionary predecessors who insisted on a popular approach without a hierarchical leadership by which a national-popular collective will was to be organised. Bahraini Khomeinists somehow undermined the integrity of popular forces around Arab nationalist movements regarding pursuing a popular political subject for sovereignty in Bahrain. Thus, the Khomeinist manifesto backfired. New Arab Left members abandoned their initial support for the Iranian revolution and defended the complete sovereignty of Bahrain.⁵⁷ More importantly, it created a favourable opportunity for Al Khalifa to postpone the idea of reopening the parliament and drew popular attention to the crisis of foreign subversion from Iranian intervention.

As a consequence, the issue of the contested sovereign subject of Al Khalifa, affected for a long time by counter-hegemonic intellectuals as a colonial legacy, was now diverted to the issue of the sovereignty norm. The notion of non-intervention outweighed the concept of the people as the primary political subject for sovereignty. At this point, while a more active Saudi leadership emerged to convene a Gulf security framework in the fallout from the Iranian revolution, the geopolitical conflict around the Palestinian question and the Iran-Iraq war also accelerated its pace. These

⁵⁶ Emphasis added, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'FCO 8/3307 Internal Situation in Bahrain', August 6, 1979.

⁵⁷ Interview Ali Qasim Rabia, *Manama*, January 3, 2016.

developments then set the stage for the birth of the GCC as Al Khalifa's alternative alignment choice, to which the discussion now turns.

6.5 Setting the Stage for the GCC

Ever since the parliamentary experiment was dissolved under the pressure from Saudi Arabia in 1975, following the Saudi leadership seemed to be a harmless optional alignment for Al Khalifa's economic and political needs. The Saudi leadership opened up a conduit through which the Khalifa showcased itself in the regional and international arena. While using coercive methods on popular movements, the political struggle between Al Khalifa and Bahraini counter-hegemonic intellectuals from both secular and religious sides was not an urgent issue to be solved. Moreover, the regional geopolitical and capitalist development also created a favourable juncture for Al Khalifa that could retain its ideological disconnection from civil society rather than have any further political dialogue with the people. From this point, the scheme of Gulf alignment organised by six Gulf Arab monarchies came gradually into a shape and then had feedback influence of the ideological development of Arab nationalism in Bahrain.

6.5.1 Saudi leadership

After the Ramadan War in October 1973, Sadat's *Infitah* (open-door) policy and the oil crisis gave Gulf Arab States more political leverage in the Middle East. The war then set the stage for Al Khalifa to join the action of oil reduction led by Saudi Arabia when the Saudi regime was acknowledged, allegedly, as a rising power to influence the Palestinian question, rather than Sadat's Egypt.⁵⁸ It also gave the impression that Saudi Arabia saw the oil weapon as a power foreign policy tool, using such leverage in the Palestinian question and its ties with a developing state that was against communism.⁵⁹ In this context, Saudi-Bahraini ties were fortified through a bilateral cultural and economic agreement after November 1974, including a significant

⁵⁸ Said Zahlan, *Palestine and the Gulf States: The Presence at the Table*.

⁵⁹ Rabi and Mueller, 'The Gulf Arab States and Israel since 1967: From "No Negotiation" to Tacit Cooperation', 580.

construction project for a causeway, which was expected to be the primary driver for boosting the Bahraini economy by linking two lands. At the same time, while Gulf regional cooperation was launched, Al Khalifa was also desperate to see further coordination in the military field.⁶⁰ These developments gave Al Khalifa some confidence to make a further move on the question of *Juffair*. In June 1975, Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak, Bahraini Foreign Minister, said in an interview with the Beirut weekly *As-Sayyad* that,

Bahrain could terminate facilities granted to the American fleet if all other Gulf states removed centres of big-power presence from their territories ... Bahrain will commit itself to any clearly-defined Gulf consensus calling for the removal of centres of international influence in the area.⁶¹

This statement was then finalised in June 1977 when the Bahraini Foreign Ministry announced it was terminating the leasing agreement. But US ships were still able to use Bahraini facilities. The termination of the Bahraini-US deal did not alter US de facto military presence in Bahrain.

This Saudi-Bahraini alignment was apparently asymmetrical but nonetheless gave material resources for maintaining the ruling status of Al Khalifa. With Saudi economic backing, Al Khalifa took advantage of state development projects to tie itself further to the Bahraini middle classes, including the religious right and some veteran Arab nationalists in the 1960s, in order to resist the New Arab Left. Despite the sectarian divergence between Bahraini Shias and Sunnis, in the mid-1970s, some Shia intellectuals and veteran Arab nationalists became the regime's 'organic intellectual' linkage to Bahraini society under state developmental projects and propaganda of counter-revolution against the Left. To some extent, they might have informed Al Khalifa's understanding of the Arab cause that could compete against the New Arab Left's popular and revolutionary approach to the Palestinian question. This rationale echoed with Saudi Arabia's intention of de-radicalising the revolutionary approach to the Arab cause by upholding Pan-Islamist solidarity via the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and Pan-Arabist collaboration through the inter-Arab state framework in the 1970s.

⁶⁰ *Reuter*, November 24, 1974, Bahrain Fiche, AWDU, Exeter University.

⁶¹ *Inter Press Service*, June 11, 1975, Bahrain Fiche, AWDU, Exeter University.

Alongside the emergence of a more active Saudi leadership of counter-insurgency towards popular movements and political participation, which had interrupted the progress of Bahraini political reform, the Bahraini socio-political context tilted the scales in the political struggle between the people and the regime. While rumours that the Sabah regime of Kuwait would revive the suspended parliament in the late 1970s spread among Gulf rulers, the Saudi regime was determined not to give ‘free expression to radical and anti-regime ideas’ nor to ‘toy with similar democratic experiments’.⁶² This tough Saudi stance on popular political representation was reflected in the Al Khalifa regime’s hesitation to revive the parliament, especially those strong figures within Al Khalifa like Shaikh Khalifa bin Sulman, the Bahraini Prime Minister. These doubts and dilemma on the part of Al Khalifa were noted by the Middle East Department of Foreign Commonwealth Office in London in a report:

[The Al Khalifa regime needs to be] thinking carefully about how to buttress their position, which does not look as strong as it has looked in the past two decades. They represent a minority of the population, they no longer have the prospect of huge sums of money to ‘throw’ at problems to make them go away ... They could try to widen their support in Bahrain, perhaps by reviving an assembly, but this is going to mean fairly speedy concessions if they are going to be effective. And they could try to look elsewhere for support – to Saudi Arabia and Iraq who could provide the economic and ... ultimately the military support to help them remain in power. But lessons from across the water teach them that concessions have to be timely to be effective and that foreign support, however strong, is no substitute for domestic good-will.⁶³

However, the revival of the Bahraini parliament was never realised until the early 2000s. By the time the GCC was established under Saudi leadership, the ideological equilibrium of social forces between popular movements and the regime around the development of Arab nationalism reversed. While ideological rivalry emerged between Saudi Arabia and Iran after the Shia clerics exercised their influence in the Iranian government after November 1979,⁶⁴ the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in December 1979 and the Iran-Iraq war broke out in September 1980, Saudi Arabia now

⁶² Peterson, *Anglo-American Policy toward the Persian Gulf, 1978-1985: Power, Influence and Restraint*, 83.

⁶³ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, ‘FCO 8/3489 Bahrain Internal Political Affairs’, 1980, British National Archives.

⁶⁴ Marschall, *Iran’s Persian Gulf Policy: From Khomeini to Khatami*, 46.

demonstrated its more active leadership in the Gulf. Due to its close economic ties with Saudi Arabia, Al Khalifa followed the Saudi path, rejecting the idea of popular political participation. While Khomeinists failed to establish their widely-received leadership in popular movements, Bahraini popular forces were shattered and failed to give impetus to a strong counter-hegemonic revolutionary momentum, which had once been driving the development of Arab nationalism since the late 1960s. In contrast, the escalating regional geopolitical and capitalist competition since the end of the 1970s favoured the other trend of reactionary social forces around Arab nationalism.

6.5.2 *Shift in the Arab cause*

While the rise of Khomeinism alongside the Iranian revolution changed the geopolitical landscape in the Gulf, it also injected new social forces into the development of Arab nationalism around the issues of the Arab cause and the Iran-Iraq war.

Soon after the Camp David agreement, Al Khalifa and other Gulf Arab monarchies denounced Sadat's arbitrary decision on Egypt's rapprochement with Israel. But, compounded by the fallout of the Iranian revolution, Al Khalifa's stance on the Palestinian question was expected to be challenged at any moment by Syria and Iraq, which were upholding a more radical nationalist ideology, and by Khomeinist revolutionaries. Having ideological affinities with some factions among popular movements in Bahrain, these forces put Al Khalifa in jeopardy, testing the regime's commitment to the Arab cause. Nevertheless, the following geopolitical dynamics in the Gulf opened up a favourable movement for Al Khalifa, seeking a solution to the dilemma in alignment from outside rather than inside Bahrain.

After the occupation of the Grand Mosque at Mecca in November 1979, for the Saudi regime, 'all concerns for the Palestinians' actually 'went out of the window...[in order to receive] tangible security guarantees from the Carter Administration'.⁶⁵ The Al Khalifa regime followed suit. In June 1981, the Israeli air force flew over Saudi Arabia to attack a nuclear reactor in Baghdad, sending the Gulf monarchies a warning

⁶⁵ Peterson, *Anglo-American Policy toward the Persian Gulf, 1978-1985: Power, Influence and Restraint*, 81.

signal. This event awakened these monarchies' geopolitical concerns about the Palestinian question.⁶⁶ Soon, Crown Prince Fahd of Saudi Arabia proposed an 8-point peace plan in August 1981. It was seen as the 'first clear-cut formula put forward publicly for the resolution of the 33-year old Arab-Israeli conflict', and was issued by the Gulf Arab states.⁶⁷ As a milestone in the Arab cause, this plan resonated with the Camp David agreement. For the first time, it implied a two-state solution as the core of regional peace, on condition that Israel must pull out of the territories it occupied after 1967; and it was later adopted in the *Fez Declaration* of the Arab League in late 1982.⁶⁸ This proposal provided Al Khalifa with an alternative approach to the Palestinian question by following Saudi leadership. It pitched in with Al Khalifa's policy towards the Arab cause, delivering the goals of 'land for peace' and 'restoration of the Palestinians' rights' through regional and international collective frameworks.

Al Khalifa's stance, however, faced another challenge from the other shore of the Gulf. As noted earlier, Khomeinism redefined the established political order through his universal Islamist agenda and introduced a cultural approach to the relations between Muslim countries and others. Under the overarching agenda of the Islamic revolution, the solution to the Palestinian question was unsurprisingly related to the Khomeinist project of toppling the Gulf monarchies that chose to stand with US imperialism and Zionism. At this critical moment, the Iranian revolution indeed 'engendered a paradigm shift in that country's foreign policy towards Israel and the West' and revived 'the idea that the regime at home had to be overthrown' before Israel and the West were confronted.⁶⁹ But while the New Arab Left was struggling to remobilise widespread support and Khomeinists were unable to establish cross-ideological leadership within society, popular forces in Bahrain seemed powerless. The New Arab Left's leadership of counter-hegemonic forces, as discussed in chapter 4, failed to build itself among various ideological currents, and thus a national-popular collective will was difficult to organise around Arab nationalism within civil society.

⁶⁶ Said Zahlan, *Palestine and the Gulf States: The Presence at the Table*, 72.

⁶⁷ Mujtaba Razvi, 'The Fahd Peace Plan', *Pakistan Horizon* 34, no. 4 (1981): 48.

⁶⁸ Joseph Kostiner, 'Saudi Arabia and the Arab-Israeli Peace Process: The Fluctuation of Regional Coordination', in *Security in the Gulf: Historical Legacies and Future Prospects*, ed. Matteo Legrenzi (Oxon, 2011), 85.

⁶⁹ Stein, *Representing Israel in Modern Egypt: Ideas, Intellectuals and Foreign Policy from Nasser to Mubarak*, 161.

Al Khalifa was somehow relieved from being challenged by its stance on the Palestinian question. Even though Al Khalifa was swamped with how to manage the impact of the regional conflicts, the development of the Iran-Iraq war was nonetheless leading Al Khalifa towards an alternative alignment in the name of Arab unity.

6.5.3 *Iran-Iraq war*

While the Iran-Iraq war, as one of the fallouts of the Iranian revolution, inflamed the clash between Iran and Iraq since Ba'ath assumed power in 1968, it subtly changed Iraq's relations with the Gulf Arab monarchies and more importantly the role of Arab nationalism in Al Khalifa's regional policy. As the Iran-Iraq clash escalated in a more physically violent way on the battlefield, the conflict also represented an ideological rivalry between Arab Ba'athist Iraq and Persian Shia Iran. For Iraqi Ba'athists, Khomeini's universalistic and populist revolutionary ideas were undoubtedly a challenge to Ba'athist ideological foundation of nationalism and socialism, especially when Khomeinism instigated the rise of Iraqi Shias against Sunnis in power. This perceived challenge to Saddam Hussein's regime eventually brought about his decision to invade Iran in September 1980. Military action gave Hussein an opportunity to demonstrate his political superiority in both the national and regional arenas. Hussein's war with Iran boosted 'common ethnic and sectarian affinities with the Arab Sunni regimes of the Gulf' in the confrontation with Persian Shia Islamic Iran.⁷⁰ Nonetheless, Iraq's ideological affinity with the Gulf monarchies was driven more by Ba'athist Pan-Arabism than by sectarian ideas. It was supported by Hussein's de-radicalization in Iraq's foreign relations after the mid-1970s, especially after the 1978 Baghdad summit with discussion of the Camp David agreement.⁷¹ Hussein's Arabist approach to external relations was overtly shown earlier in the Arab National Charter in March 1980. [Reminiscent of Gamel Abdel Nasser of Egypt in the 1960s, Hussein attempted to boost his leadership through the non-aligned movement and Arab solidarity, rather than the Islamic coterie dominated by the Saudi leadership.⁷² As such,

⁷⁰ Ibrahim Al-Marashi, 'Iraq's Gulf Policy and Regime Security From the Monarchy to the Post-Ba'athist Era', in *Security in the Gulf: Historical Legacies and Future Prospects*, ed. Matteo Legrenzi (Oxon: Routledge, 2011), 123.

⁷¹ Adeed Dawisha, 'Invoking the Spirit of Arabism: Islam in the Foreign Policy of Saddam's Iraq', in *Islam in Foreign Policy*, ed. Adeed Dawisha (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 117–18.

⁷² Dawisha, 118–20.

‘the minimal utilisation of religious symbolism in war rhetoric and propaganda throughout the duration of the conflict is indicative of a much broader and more fundamental system of values held by the president and the party leadership’.⁷³ An Arab nationalist world view of this kind held by Hussein was being continuously expressed during the Iran-Iraq war.

This ideological and geopolitical competition for Gulf superiority between Iran and Iraq featured a turning point in Al Khalifa pursuing alignment. At face value, Al Khalifa’s stance towards the Iran-Iraq conflict was anchored in the principle of neutrality and a peaceful resolution to end the war. It was delivered publicly by Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak, Bahrain’s Foreign Minister, in the general debate of the 35th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations on 3 October 1980:

...we support the appeals and call upon both parties for self-restraint and a cease-fire and [to] resort to negotiations and respond to the good offices of the Islamic Conference and Security Council Resolution 479 of 28 September 1980.⁷⁴

The Khalifa regime’s neutrality seemed contradictory to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, which supported Iraq openly by offering funding and military facilities. But, in fact, behind Al Khalifa’s alleged neutrality was its concern that echoed Kuwait’s decision to choose the lesser evil between Iran and Iraq.⁷⁵ To Al Khalifa, ‘the Iranians were not making it easy for [Bahrain] to remain neutral’ if they prevailed in the conflict.⁷⁶ Moreover, the most critical issue around the Iran-Iraq war was Al Khalifa’s fear that the Soviets might take advantage of Gulf conflict and exercise its influence. If this were the case, the best strategy would have been to make an open alignment with the US to protect the relations between moderate Arab oil-producers and Western consumers. In this sense, Al Khalifa stood on the same ideological ground as the West, representing a unity of capitalist states against communism. However, while the people still saw the US as the primary supporter of Israel, this could sow the seeds of change in Bahrain: either the regime became ‘less moderate or risk[ed] being overthrown’.⁷⁷

⁷³ Dawisha, 114.

⁷⁴ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, ‘FCO 8/3493 Bahrain External Relations’.

⁷⁵ Marschall, *Iran’s Persian Gulf Policy: From Khomeini to Khatami*, 71.

⁷⁶ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, ‘FCO 8/3493 Bahrain External Relations’.

⁷⁷ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, ‘FCO 8/3897 Bahrain External’, 1981, British National Archives.

At this moment, Al Khalifa's dilemma in forming policy towards alignment showed the legacy of the interrupted passive revolution in 1975. On the one side was taking a more Arab nationalist approach to the Palestinian question and the Iran-Iraq war. But this would fortify the ideological linkage between civil society and other societal agents like the New Arab Left, or radical Arab states like Iraq, giving new momentum to counter-hegemonic forces around the idea of popular sovereignty. And this might escalate the social conflict between Al Khalifa and the people. On the other side was a boldly open alignment with the US, for which Al Khalifa was longing. However, this decision could have a more catastrophic and immediate impact on Al Khalifa. All the different ideological trends of social forces would be able to make their alliances again under the banner of anti-imperialism. Whether choosing one side or the other, Al Khalifa inevitably faced a long-standing issue around the political struggle, i.e. the contested sovereign subject of Al Khalifa vis-à-vis the people as the most important political subject for Bahrain's sovereignty. While Al Khalifa rejected reviving the Parliament, this dilemma of forming an alignment could not be solved from an incomplete hegemonic state of Bahrain. As such, ideological support for its alignment was by no means to be derived from either civil society or other radical Arabs.

6.5.4 Bahrain's Arab nationalism around the GCC

Rather than choose between open alignment with the US and a radical Arab nationalist path, both of which would have aggravated the social conflict within Bahrain, Al Khalifa chose another alternative. As a solution to this dilemma, a comprehensive Gulf cooperation framework under Saudi leadership appeared to be Al Khalifa's modus vivendi for both political and economic reasons. The GCC framework preserved Al Khalifa's ideological ties with the Arab cause, and its alleged principle of non-intervention of external powers as well. This rationale can be found in the speech by Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak, Bahraini Foreign Minister, to the general debate of the 36th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations in October 1981 after the GCC was established in May 1981:

[The GCC] is set up in conformity with the principles of the United Nations Charter [and] represents a political, economic and social grouping of the Six member states in order to face up to challenges and external threats which

confront the region and keep it away from sphere of influence and international strife ... the security and stability of the Gulf is the responsibility of its States only, and that they are able to secure that, and that nobody has the right to interfere in its internal affairs. The rejection by the leaders of the region of any foreign intervention, of whatever source and kind, reaffirmed the determination of these States to resist all endeavours to link the region to international conflicts that are inconsistent with the principles of Non-Alignment and the United Nations Charter...⁷⁸

His statement corresponded to ‘the sublime objective of the Arab nation’ and ‘the conviction [to] coordination, cooperation, and integration’ noted in the preface of the GCC Charter, which not only complied with an international framework on the basis of the non-intervention principle but also offered a less revolutionary version of Arab nationalism.⁷⁹ Furthermore, the GCC then allowed carrying on with and enhancing the forming and accumulating process of Gulf capitals, as noted by Hanieh, that offered the social bases for monarchical rule through various capitalist projects.⁸⁰

From the above statement, the rationale of Al Khalifa’s alignment decision appeared to resonate with the existing understanding in IRME scholarship, either a normative shift from Arab nationalism to a sovereignty norm as argued by IR constructivism, or the regime’s omni-balancing between the domestic and external threats maintained by neo-realists. However, as shown in this chapter, Al Khalifa’s alignment with the GCC derived from a more complex process, which constituted historical conditions and contingencies in the interplay of domestic, regional and international sociopolitical dynamics. Eventually, such a decision became a way out from the dilemma of making an open alignment with the US that had been besetting Al Khalifa since Bahrain’s independence. More importantly, it was an outcome of the political struggle between the people and the regime, conditioned by the sociopolitical dynamics following the interrupted passive revolution in 1975. While the political struggle was revolving around the issue of contested sovereignty, Al Khalifa’s participation in the GCC brought about a geopolitical impact whereby Bahrain’s regional policy was brought into Saudi Arabia’s orbit ever after.

⁷⁸ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, ‘FCO 8/3897 Bahrain External’, October 1, 1981.

⁷⁹ *The Charter of the Gulf Cooperation Council*, 25 May 1981.

⁸⁰ Hanieh, *Capitalism and Class in the Gulf Arab States*, 57–84.

At this point, how do we understand Arab nationalism and its interplay with Bahrain's policy towards regional alignment? Al Khalifa's decision to join the GCC actually had feedback influence on the intellectual development of counter-hegemonic forces around Arab nationalism. At the time of the British withdrawal, New Arab Left intellectuals, as noted in chapter 4, had been strongly opposed to the regional monarchical cooperative scheme in the case of the nine-shaikhdom proposal and saw such a scheme as a violation of the people's will. Their attitude towards the GCC at the time of its establishment was quite similar, while mocking at the GCC as 'the Gulf Complacency Council' and 'a concert of tribal regimes against the people and against revolution'.⁸¹ However, while the Iranian revolutionary agenda and suspicious territorial claims remained and seemingly rosy future plans were initiated by the GCC, some New Arab Left intellectuals changed their attitude. They thought 'it would solve our social and economic problems and raise the [living] standards of the people'.⁸² Moreover, 'the GCC seemed to be welcomed by people. We [the Popular Front] always support the people's will and expected that the GCC could represent more the people's voice.'⁸³ As such, although Al Khalifa and the New Arab Left were interpreting the GCC in different ways, the GCC appeared to be an alternative alignment that was accepted by counter-hegemonic and hegemonic social forces around Arab nationalism in Bahrain. Yet, the equilibrium between these forces was now tilting towards the latter. In the 1980s, history saw that New Arab Left movements were continuously cracked down upon by the Al Khalifa regime, whose ruling status was increasingly fortified by acquiring resources through its ties with Saudi Arabia and other GCC members.

Conclusion

This chapter has offered a historical analysis of the formation of Bahrain's policy towards regional alignment in the 1970s. By extending some arguments presented in previous chapters through a Gramscian lens, this chapter has shown how the struggle

⁸¹ Interview with Abdullah Janahi, *Manama*, January 3, 2016.

⁸² Interview with Ali Qasim Rabia, *Manama*, December 13, 2015.

⁸³ Interview with Abdullah Janahi, *Manama*, January 3, 2016.

between counter-hegemonic and hegemonic forces around Arab nationalism continuously played its role in Al Khalifa's policy on alignment. For this, arguing against the existing literature informed by the approaches of omni-balancing, regime survival and shared identity, I hold that Bahrain's policy towards the GCC is best understood as a result of the political struggle around the contested sovereign subject of Bahrain in a more complex societal context. Under the pressure of capitalist development and geopolitical competition, such a context was also interrelated to both the historical conditions of the failure of the parliamentary experiment in 1975 and the contingencies of Al Khalifa's response to a series of extended foreign policy issues. While the political struggle evolved and was a social driving force in Bahrain's regional policy, the meaning of Arab nationalism changed qualitatively within Al Khalifa's decision on alignment over time. With the end of my empirical analyses of Arab nationalism and its interplay with Bahraini's regional policy, this thesis now turns to the concluding chapter, which will summarise each chapter, reflect on some implications of the findings and limitations of this thesis, and point out potential directions for further research following a Gramscian approach in IRME and more broadly historical sociology.

7 CONCLUSION: FINDINGS, REFLECTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This thesis has sought to elucidate the case of Bahrain's policy towards Gulf alignment in the 1970s and thereby revisit the relationship between Arab nationalism and foreign policy in the Middle East. The empirical investigation has been conducted through a reconstructed Gramscian lens as a historical sociological framework, which follows in particular the tradition of historical materialism but is distinctive to the Coxian one. As a proposed viable historical sociological approach to the relationship of ideologies and foreign policy, this framework has attempted to bring other histories of Arab nationalism into IRME through three interrelated concepts of development, ideology and struggle, informed by the revival of Gramscian insights. It explains how the evolution of Arab nationalism in a social context of political struggle became a driver for state regional policy in the Middle East after 1967. By integrating both the empirical and theoretical discussion around the thesis puzzle – the role of Arab nationalism in the international relations of the Middle East in the post-1967 phase – the final chapter of this thesis serves its purpose of reviewing the preceding chapters in the thesis and then self-reappraising the themes laid out in it. Not only does it recount the findings of this thesis in comparison with the other existing explanations reviewed in the introductory chapter, but it also reflects the lessons and limitations of the thesis and proposes some potential avenues for further research drawn from a theoretical reconstruction of Gramsci for the case of Bahrain in the 1970s.

7.1 Summary of the Findings

Through a reflection on a widely accepted statement concerning the demise of Arab nationalism in the post-1967 phase, the contribution of this thesis has been to give alternative accounts of such a statement through a historical sociological lens and the case of Bahrain. It has shown two aspects: tracing the *provenance* of Arab nationalism on the one hand and examining the *context* in which Arab nationalism influenced state foreign policy on the other. The introductory chapter of this thesis has critically reviewed the existing explanations in IRME scholarship through these

aspects. With the exception of historical sociological approaches to relocating ideas in social change in the Middle East, the lacuna in other approaches of IR constructivism and eclecticism has been demonstrated in their more or less shared understandings. First, Arab nationalism and the sovereignty norm are as contradictory as two distinctive normative structures of parochial versus universal culture, informing different identities, national interests and the state system. Thus, second, the ways in which Arab nationalism influenced foreign policy depended on the extent to which an ideational congruency between national and state identity could be achieved through the process of international socialisation and state formation. These perspectives seem to be nicely juxtaposed with the claim for the demise of Arab nationalism after 1967 and an anchoring process for a sovereignty norm in the 1970s. This claim is supported by an observable regional tranquillity in the Gulf among the states during the 1970s that allows an explanation of Arab nationalism being of less political significance to Bahrain's regional policy among others, whereas other histories of Arab nationalism were still alive within Bahraini society beneath the radar of inter-state relations in the Middle East, even after 1967. Such divergent understandings of Arab nationalism in relation to the discussion on foreign policy raise the question of what explains the interplay of Arab nationalism and Bahrain's policy toward regional alignment in the post-1967 and the independence phase, and how.

The theoretical framework outlined in chapter 2 was, therefore, designed to address this question through a reconstruction of Gramsci as a viable historical sociological approach. The framework provides an alternative and reformulated Gramscian lens for IR beyond the existing Coxian approach. The chapter argues that the Coxian brand of a historical materialist approach to IR is subject to a general critique like other mainstream IR theories: compartmentalising the national-international boundary instead of seeing international relations as a social totality. Therefore, its analysis of the transition of contemporary international orders is located in the history of inter-state competition rather than unpacking the transition under the theme of social formation. As such, a reconstruction of Gramsci is proposed to rectify the Coxian drawbacks and offer another avenue for a Gramscian intervention in IR. This framework follows the recently revival in scholarly interest in international social theory, especially the school of uneven and combined development, by which it teases

out Gramsci's own understanding of international relations. The chapter further argues that, on the one hand, Gramsci's insights into capitalism – its expansionary nature leading to uneven social formations among societies and a 'historical combination' in the international sphere – founds a ground for his understanding of international relations. Therefore, on the other hand, such unevenness and combination create social bases for the formation and evolution of ideologies and social forces along with capitalist formation. As such, a reconstructed version of Gramsci through the notion of uneven and combined development sets the ontological foundation for how this thesis conceptualises international relations. More importantly, it offers a tool to flesh out historical sociological analyses of Arab nationalism and Bahrain's regional policy by taking late-coming capitalist formation into account.

Chapter 2 then conceptualises three interrelated key terms – development, ideology and struggle – informed by Gramsci for the analytical framework employed in this thesis. By 'development', following Gramsci's understanding of capitalism and international relations, I define development as changes in the social relations of the mode of production and refer to two historical conjunctures in the case of Bahrain. The first one is the encounter of Bahrain's tributary social relations and international capitalism through British tutelage in the early twentieth century. The encounter created the effect of a combined social formation, generating contradictions within Bahrain and then deriving different social forces of class around the rising moment of Arab nationalism, under British colonialism. The second conjuncture registers the moment of Bahrain's formal independence from being a British protectorate in 1971. It further relates to and is conceptualised through Gramsci as a 'passive relation', addressing a political transition corresponding to Bahraini social transformation after the British withdrawal. The concept of development elucidates the late-coming capitalist formation of Bahrain under British colonialism and after Bahrain's formal independence. Moreover, it conceptualises a historical sociological context for subsequent analyses in this thesis and relates to two other two concepts: ideology and struggle. These two concepts allow a historical sociological investigation of 'the second image', unpacking the ways in which international pressure intertwines with socio-political dynamics on the national level. Through these two concepts, Arab nationalism can best be understood by its ideological components which, I argue in

the case of Bahrain, are linked to movements within civil society but are contradictory to the sociopolitical establishment designed by the regime. The contradictions on the ideological level between Bahraini society and Al Khalifa are then represented in two polarised social forces of counter-hegemony and hegemony around Arab nationalism. They continuously fed momentum into the political struggle that became a locus at which this thesis explained the interplay of Arab nationalism and Bahrain's policy towards regional alignment in the 1970s.

Conceived in these three concepts informed by Gramsci, chapters 3–5 offer evidence for and analyses of the origins and evolution of Arab nationalism in relation to the political struggle among different social forces from the British colonial era to Bahrain's independence phase. Chapter 3 extends the concept of development by drawing on insights from an investigation of nationalism and capitalism in peripheral areas, or in the context of late-coming capitalist formation. It mainly focuses on the theme of Bahraini capitalist formation under British colonialism. I argue in chapter 3 that the characteristics of uneven and combined capitalist development of Bahrain under British colonialism created antagonistic social forces between the Al Khalifa regime and Bahraini people, along with inceptive class formation. This process realising capitalist sociality in Bahrain, however, brought with it some corresponding political effects. On the one side, Al Khalifa's rule was ideologically founded on a colonial view of demarcating ethnosectarian lines informed by British colonialism, whereas on the other side Bahraini popular and nationalist movements evolved and gradually shaped a 'collective will' around Arab nationalism as unified social forces against existing political authorities. In a Gramscian sense, the former represents an arbitrary and rationalistic 'willed ideology' of the dominant ruling class. However, the latter is a historical 'organic ideology' of the subordinated classes, deriving from civil society in a given structure designed, in the case of Bahrain, by colonialism. For this, I further argue that a disconnection between the two raised difficulties in organising a collective will between Al Khalifa and Bahraini civil society during the British colonial era. Moreover, such an ideological disconnection continued to exist even in the independence phase, being reflected in the political struggle within Bahrain when Bahrain's state formation after its formal independence was surrounded by regional revolutionary upheaval.

Chapter 4 extends the discussion on the political aspects of Bahraini late-coming capitalist formation under British colonialism covered in chapter 3 and focuses on the concept of ideology around the evolution of Arab nationalism in Bahrain. It is designed to highlight the thesis' rationale of bringing other histories of Arab nationalism into IRME. The chapter outlines the role of the New Arab Left as a rising revolutionary current of Arab nationalist movements in the 1960s and major counter-hegemonic forces in the 1970s. The chapter provides a historical analysis of why New Arab Left intellectuals emerged across the Middle East in the 1960s by drawing on Marxist-Leninist ideologies, and how they impacted on some Arab nationalist movements in Arabia and the Gulf, which led to the revolutions in South Yemen and Dhofar. I argue that the movement had a conspicuous impact on changing the evolution of Arab nationalism in Bahrain and catalysing the leadership of New Arab Left intellectuals in Bahraini nationalist and popular movements in the 1970s. This process demonstrates that the Bahraini New Arab Left attempted to unify different social forces, including communist and some Shia factions, into a unified counter-hegemony and then organise a 'national-popular collective will' of Arab nationalism. However, I further argue that due to the setback of the other revolutionary movements in Arabia, Al Khalifa's colonial view being practised through its tactics of 'divide and rule' and constant suppression of 'the Left', and with the ambiguous alliance and ideological rift among these counter-hegemonic forces, the New Arab Left's leadership was fragile, so that unified counter-hegemonic forces around Arab nationalism were fractured. The New Arab Left's fragile leadership then faced a much more severe situation when the Iranian revolution broke out and catalysed another current of counter-hegemonic forces, along with the rise of Khomeinism.

Following chapter 4 on the rise of counter-hegemony against the context of the Marxist-Leninist revolutions in Arabia, chapter 5 examines the historical conjuncture of Bahrain's formal independence and the continuing political struggle within Bahrain through Gramsci's theorisation of 'passive revolution'. It anatomises the process of Bahrain's state formation in which Al Khalifa attempted a 'historical restoration' for its rule, resolving the continuing political struggle between itself and civil society extending from the previous colonial era. Such a restoration was triggered by Al Khalifa's compromise in launching a series of political reforms, especially the 1972

Constituent Assembly and later the 1973 Parliament. During this process, Al Khalifa tried to link itself ideologically to Bahraini civil society through the reforms. Following the US open-door policy, social transformation in the Gulf in the early 1970s entered another stage and generated new momentum for class formation in this area. In Bahrain, Al Khalifa co-opted newly formed subaltern capitalist classes, most of which were from the old cadres of the ANM in the 1950s and '60s, as its 'organic intellectuals'. Nonetheless, with seemingly well-organised social forces under the leadership of the New Arab Left both in Parliament and in the street, Al Khalifa failed to co-opt this new generation of Arab nationalists and continuously played the sectarian card to undermine counter-hegemonic forces. Eventually, under the pressure of other conservative forces like Saudi Arabia, the Parliament was dissolved in August 1975 after its inception about two years before. I argue that the end of the Parliament equated with Al Khalifa's interrupted historical restoration. It had several outcomes for Bahraini politics in the second half of the 1970s: first, Bahraini political development was from then on encapsulated in the Saudi orbit including Bahrain's regional policy shown in chapter 6; second, Al Khalifa's ideological disconnection from civil society remained and its rule became what Gramsci calls 'dictatorship without hegemony', which mainly relied on coercion rather than consent; and thus, finally, a national-popular collective will was floating at the point of the New Arab Left's fractured counter-hegemonic forces, as shown in chapter 4, and Al Khalifa's incomplete hegemony. This floating national-popular collective then created a dilemma for the regime's open alignment with 'the West', particularly the US.

Chapter 6, as the final chapter of this thesis, examines Bahrain's policy towards regional alignment in the 1970s, analysing the ways in which Arab nationalism was intertwining with some foreign policy issues during this period and how this process led to Bahrain's alignment with the GCC in 1981. In support of a historical sociological investigation of Bahrain's regional policy, this chapter therefore extends the findings of the previous chapters with a focus on how the political struggle among different social forces intervened between the interplay of Arab nationalism and policy. Resonating with the thesis' puzzle and the existing literature in IRME reviewed in chapter 1, I argue that there is a piece missing from current understandings, which is a significant implication from the previous chapters. It is the contestation over

sovereignty and its ideological ties to Arab nationalism. I further argue in the case of Bahrain that contestation over sovereignty does not lie in its assumed incompatible norm with Arab nationalism, as constructivists and eclecticists might argue. Rather, it is about the sovereign subject with respect to who represents the major political subject of the post-colonial state of Bahrain. Such a contestation was particularly revealed between two polarised forces: on the one side, the New Arab Left which attempted to organise a national-popular collective will around Arab nationalism and called for popular political participation after Bahrain's independence; on the other side, Al Khalifa who was suspicious of such a national-popular collective will comprising unified counter-forces against its ruling status. This contestation along with the political struggle then set the context for how Arab nationalism having an impact on Bahrain's policy towards Gulf alignment is analysed.

This contestation, arguably deriving from the British colonial era, and evolving along with the rise of the New Arab Left and remaining unsolved after Bahrain's independence, made Bahrain's alignment with external powers in the 1970s very contentious, especially with the US. On such a contentious issue of forming an alignment with the US, the ideological ties of Arab nationalism to it resonated more broadly beyond Bahrain. The political struggle within Bahrain at each point of the discussion of Bahrain's alignment with the US was further related to the Palestinian question and the Arab cause, the confrontation between the US and the Soviet Union in the region, the rise of Khomeinism and the Iranian revolution, and the Iran-Iraq war. This series of extended foreign policy issues, however, opened up a contingent way out for Al Khalifa as regards the dilemma of forming an alignment with the US and paved the way towards Bahrain's participation in the GCC. On this point, I further argue that the genesis of the GCC might not have been, as has been argued, as a result of a direct response to the challenge brought by the common threat of the Iranian revolution in the existing literature, the result was omni-balancing, collaborative regime survival and a shared sectarian identity. Instead, in terms of maintaining authoritarian sovereignty in Bahrain, the Iranian revolution could be understood as an opportunity for Al Khalifa. Not only did the revolution allow the regime to continuously exercise a colonial approach of demarcating Bahraini society along sectarian lines and preventing unified counter-hegemonic forces rising again, but it

also allowed Al Khalifa's authoritarian rule to rely mostly on coercive power without seeking the people's consent or reviving the idea of Parliament. In this regard, the relationship of Arab nationalism and state policy towards regional alignment may be more complex than the existing literature argues and go beyond a dichotomous understanding of Arab nationalism and sovereignty.

7.2 Lessons of the Thesis

As this thesis has suggested, the formulation and evolution of Arab nationalism is best understood by taking the societal context and political struggle among the different social forces around it into consideration. This claim is empirically supported by the case of Bahrain via a historical sociological theoretical framework of a reconstruction of Gramsci. But what are the lessons to be drawn from the case of Bahrain under a Gramscian theoretical scrutiny for IRME? The lessons of the thesis centre around an overarching theme: shedding light on other histories of Arab nationalism and thereby addressing the problem of what explains the interplay of Arab nationalism and state policy towards regional alignment in the Middle East. These lessons reflect two key aspects. They have been shown in reviewing the existing literature on Arab nationalism and foreign policy in IRME in the introductory chapter, employed in reconstructing an alternative theoretical framework of Gramsci, and then justified through the remaining empirical analyses of the thesis.

The first lesson is about the *provenance* of Arab nationalism under the theme of colonial history and late-capitalist formation. It follows the traditions of historical sociology in 'relocating ideas in social change' through a particular lens of international social theory of uneven and combined development. In the existing accounts reviewed in the introductory chapter, particularly that of IR constructivist and eclecticist literature, the notion of Arab nationalism is uncritically and interchangeably used as a term for Arabism, which registers an overarching cultural norm hovering above the region. Resonating with a cultural turn in IR reflectivism against the dominant rationalist paradigm, Arab nationalism is seen as a particular identity and an ideational product deriving from a parochial culture. Between the late nineteenth and

the mid-twentieth century, such an identity played a role in a transitional period of regional order from the Ottoman Empire to the creation of the modern state system in the Middle East. Its meaning is embedded in the theme of the constructivist version of international socialisation and digested as pre-modern residual ideas against modern sovereignty.

The thesis, however, offers an alternative and critical account of the origins of Arab nationalism, going beyond existing cultural-orientated explanations and applying a more historical and sociological notion to it. Such a lesson is undertaken in chapter 3. By specifying Bahraini social formation under British colonialism, chapter 3 then identifies the context in which Arab nationalism evolved with the support of intellectual and popular movements in Bahrain. It also suggests that the origins of Arab nationalism are best understood alternatively under the theme of late-coming capitalist social formation with respect to what changes in social relations as a structure underlie the rise of modern political ideology and movements. The lesson is substantiated by what Tom Nairn called the ‘the machinery of [the] world political economy’. This machinery features in the characteristic of ‘uneven development’ between late-coming and advanced capitalist formation and is further manifested in Gramsci’s understanding of international relations as a ‘historical combination’ on the basis of the expansionary nature of capitalism. The characteristics of uneven and combined development reveal the origins of Arab nationalism in Bahrain under the history of British colonial inspired social formation rather than that of a gigantic and timeless Arab cultural norm. Here, for the case of Bahrain, a more crucial meaning of Arab nationalism does not lie in the contradictions between itself and modern sovereignty in the international sphere of inter-Arab-Anglo competition. Instead, it is about the contradictions within the national context as the arrival point of the pressure of capitalist formation: the contradictions between the ruling authorities of the Al Khalifa regime tied to British colonialism and the newly formed middle class linked to Bahraini civil society as the major social forces driving the evolution of Arab nationalism. Conceived in Gramsci, the contradictions associate Arab nationalism with a more agent-focus approach to political struggles around the formation of modern ideology. In this vein, the lesson around the provenance of Arab nationalism redirects the existing scholarly research agenda away from hinging on unpacking the process of

international socialisation of the sovereignty norm. Furthermore, it opens up an avenue via which the thesis attempts to bring other histories of Arab nationalism into IRME through a political economy approach.

The second lesson is about how Arab nationalism influenced foreign policy through the anatomy of a societal *context* beyond a presumed state autonomy. Such a context shows that the impact of Arab nationalism on foreign policy is more complex than how a state leader autonomously chooses an item from ‘a menu of choice’ comprising many identities for instrumental purposes. Rather, the impact is suggested as being translated through political struggles among different social forces around Arab nationalism at the national level. This is why a reconstruction of Gramsci is crucial for this thesis, beyond the Coxian brand of historical materialism. While most of the existing literature follows a more or less idealist rationale and places the origins and evolution of Arab nationalism under the theme of the international socialisation of the norm of sovereignty, a research agenda for how to understand Arab nationalism in IRME is set for these approaches. It is closely tied to the political history of how state leaders assimilate themselves into a universal norm of sovereignty and then build their autonomy with the creation of a modern state. It implies that there is a fault-line between so-called pre-modern and modern phases, between which one could delimit a normative shift from a parochial culture to another with a universal culture. In the Middle East, such a normative shift usually brings about the coexistence of various identities in the political arena. Among these presumably incompatible identities, state leaders either choose between or omni-balance their objectives delivered in foreign policy.

However, this thesis challenges the presumption of state autonomy being a crucial instance of making a device through which Arab nationalism is linked to state regional policy. It further argues that such a device is best understood through anatomising political struggles in a societal context, which is the lesson demonstrated in chapters 4, 5 and 6. Taking political struggles into reconsideration, a more complex and dynamic picture around Arab nationalism and state regional policy is painted through the interactions among different social forces. Having no such assumed state autonomy in the case of Bahrain, Al Khalifa did not always deliver and represent its

political will in regional policy. Following the ‘interrupted historical restoration’ attempted through the 1973 parliamentary experiment, its dilemma of forming an open alignment with the US seemed to become severe. As such, in the political struggle between the regime and civil society, Arab nationalism is not one of the items on a menu of choice that could be utilised arbitrarily by Al Khalifa, nor did it represent a total system of culture. Instead, it shows nuanced ideological components within itself and among different intellectual orientations, corresponding to continuing contradictions as a result of Bahraini late-capitalist formation and regional geopolitical competition. The total meaning of Arab nationalism, that of Arab unity, is actually deconstructed along with different intellectual lines, polarised in the existing political struggle between counter-hegemonic and hegemonic forces, and even shown to be fragile among different forces on the counter-hegemonic side. How Al Khalifa solved the political struggle and how New Arab Left intellectuals organised unified counter-hegemonic forces are rather contingent. These contingent factors then intervened in the societal context through which this thesis explains the relationship between Arab nationalism and Bahrain’s policy towards Gulf alignment.

In this vein, a further lesson can be highlighted through the utility of Gramsci’s insights into the ‘national-popular collective will’. It is a key finding from a Gramscian historical sociological investigation of state regional policy employed in this thesis. The concept of a national-popular collective will is a subaltern concept below ‘hegemony’ and ‘counter-hegemony’, shedding light on the ideological dimension of a state. Its existence is an ideological product of a stable historical bloc, which represents the general interests of the people being coordinated by a hegemonic class. In contrast, its absence reflects an unstable state-society ideological equilibrium, which delivers a message that the rule of a hegemonic class over the people heavily relies on coercion rather than consent. These two scenarios of a national-popular collective will, in the case of Bahrain, are related to the contestation of Bahraini sovereignty along with the process of Bahraini state formation in the independence phase. The concept of a national-popular collective will then intersects analytically with the relationship of Arab nationalism and Bahrain’s regional policy. Therefore, through this concept, the existing claim of seeing Arab nationalism and sovereignty as two conflicting, or even incompatible, norms is challenged in chapter 6. For this, the

lessons of political struggle are further developed to suggest that: Al Khalifa's dilemma in forming open alignment with the US does not lie in a presumed normative conflict between sovereignty and Arab nationalism, but in the contest over the sovereign subject itself in the Bahraini context. While New Arab Left intellectuals attempted to organise a national-popular collective will around Arab nationalism, they also interpellated the idea of the people as the major political subject for Bahraini sovereignty around Bahrain's regional policy in the independence phase. Such an idea fundamentally challenged the US-Bahraini deal based on Al Khalifa's own will and contrasted with the existing hegemonic regional order under Saudi leadership in the Gulf. As such, from the specific case of Bahrain, the 'national-collective will' is a contained analytical concept, which continues Gramsci's discussion on development and ideology and shows its usefulness in the context of political struggle. Moreover, it opens up an analytical avenue through which historical sociology intervenes in the study of state regional policy and more broadly IRME.

7.3 Limitation under Reconsideration

If this thesis has shown the utility of an alternative Gramscian framework through the illustrative case of Bahrain, what are the limitations and further implications left by the thesis?

Concerning the thesis' task of offering an alternative account of the formulation and evolution of Arab nationalism and its interplay with state regional policy post-1967 by inviting other histories of Arab nationalism, the primary limitations of this thesis are data-collection, interpretation of histories and the scope of applicability of the theoretical framework. For the data-collection part, the clearest limitation is inaccessibility to first-hand Arabic materials for reasons of time and space. Such a limitation is shown particularly in the demonstration of materials on the New Arab Left movement in this thesis. My data-collection did not encompass Beirut and Damascus, which are presumed to be two major locations where researchers would be able to collect first-hand documents on the New Arab Left, and therefore does not offer complete analyses of other histories of Arab nationalism. To overcome such

limitations, apart from referring to historical narratives, this thesis mostly relies on English translated versions, e.g. some revolutionary publications from the Gulf Committee, collected from different archives in the UK as an alternative. Also, this limitation was overcome via some interviews conducted in Bahrain with those who were politically involved in the New Arab Left movement in the 1970s. The limitation on data-collection might be also reflected in the limited way in which other histories of Arab nationalism are presented in this thesis. On this point, the thesis has always acknowledged such a limitation in interpreting histories in its analyses. In the introductory chapter, I state that other histories of Arab nationalism referred to in this thesis mainly denote ‘history from below’ and follow one of the specific currents of Arab nationalist movements: The New Arab Left and its understanding of the past, especially in the context of Bahrain and the Gulf. Therefore, some other currents of Arab nationalist movements, like Ba’athists and Nasserists within and beyond Bahrain, are not seen as the main axis of narratives in my analyses.

Following the limitations noted above, another limitation on the applicability of the theoretical framework of Gramsci might arise in IRME: Was it just applied to an ‘anomalous’ case of Bahraini New Arab Left intellectuals, their political struggle against the Al Khalifa regime and Bahrain’s policy on regional alignment in the 1970s? If not, could it be extended beyond the New Arab Left and beyond Bahrain?

To justify these potential critiques, I must reiterate the foundation of a reconstructed Gramscian framework introduced in this thesis. That is Gramsci’s own understanding of international relations on the basis of his acknowledgment of the significance of capitalist formation, which was conceptualised in the notion of development with the characteristics of unevenness and combination. As the recently revival IR historical materialist interest in following Rosenberg’s attempt at building international social theory has shown, regardless of the ongoing debate concerning whether the concept of uneven and combined development could be a transhistorical abstraction beyond the capitalist epoch¹, it has evolved from ‘general abstraction’ to a

¹ Jamie Allinson, ‘When Ernest Met Leon’, *The Disorder of the Things* (blog), 15 February 2015, <https://thedisorderofthings.com/2015/02/12/when-ernest-met-leon/>.

rather concrete analytical tool to explain the rise of capitalism, modernity and geopolitical alignments.

Its usefulness has been proven to different extents in the analyses of social (trans)formation, particularly with a focus on how the mechanism of combination drove changes in the mode of production as the social basis by which the thesis has examined various political aspects of capitalist formation. Nonetheless, this does not suggest that a deterministic account could be placed in the correspondence between ‘the social’ (structural) and ‘the political’ (superstructural) instances. Instead, it suggests that a universal ‘patterned’ social change, despite its distinctive trajectory, can be noted among different societies before one delves into research on a specific case. For this, it could be argued that the concept of development offers a common threshold to any historical sociological case study in IRME with respect to making sense of historical conditions.

In this regard, although similar conditions shared among cases might be identified, it does not necessarily mean either that those conditions would lead to the same conclusion of any practices as one might expect and as already informed by international social theory. For example, even though this thesis identifies common traits of tributary social relations across the Gulf, it does not rush to the conclusion that a commonality of foreign policy in the Gulf can be depicted due to those conditions, not to mention cultural homogeneity. Here, the concepts of ideology and struggle in the framework of this thesis make their theoretical contributions. Analytically, while ideology is detached from an assumed total and timeless system of ideas in the thesis, its connotations are also referred to as political aspects of a certain social formation and revealed in the political practices of social agents who represent different social forces. This way of approaching ideology also leads to a common scenario of political struggles among these forces in the Middle East. It is not anomaly. It is conditioned by the past and its significance lies in leading potential contingent outcomes in the future. It then opens a discussion on historical contingencies, brought about by political struggles as an intervening factor, situated in the causal linkage between conditions and foreign policy. On this point, the case of the Bahraini New Arab Left and its

struggle with Al Khalifa is just one example of conducting an enquiry into political struggles, as this thesis attempts through a Gramscian lens.

7.4 For Future Research: Beyond Bahrain, Beyond the 1970s

The foregoing discussion leads one to wonder what potential future research could be carried out to overcome the limitations and expand the utility of a Gramscian framework. This thesis has attempted to demonstrate its primary research and originality through a theoretical reconstruction of Gramsci in IR. Following a recent reappraisal by other scholars, it has revived the discussion on some original insights of Gramsci. As has been shown through three interrelated concepts of development, ideology and struggle, this reconstructed Gramscian lens reformulates the Coxian brand of Gramscianism in IR. While such a theoretical lens helps to shed light on how sociopolitical dynamics on the national scale interrelates both social transformation and geopolitical competition in the region and beyond, some proposals for future research are suggested beyond the case of Bahrain and beyond the timeframe in this thesis.

One potential proposal relates to the traditions of revolutionary Marxism inherited by Gramsci, reminding us of the significance of taking ‘other histories’ of ‘struggle’ into account when one examines ideas in IRME. By collecting data and materials on seemingly oblivious histories of Arab nationalism, ‘other histories’ can be expected to be brought continuously into existing scholarship around the diplomatic histories of states. On the one hand, resonating with and following a proposal for ‘new approaches to Arab Left histories’,² to be encompassed in transnational histories of the Left in the Arab world, including different ideological currents, research on ‘politics from below’ allows making advances through comparisons of time and space. On the other hand, in the case of Bahrain, this can be expanded from the 1970s into the 1980s and beyond. Potential research questions might include: What was the ideological development of Arab nationalism in Bahrain after the GCC was established? In the repressing phase of the 1980s, how did New Arab Left intellectuals rejuvenate their

² Haugbolle and Sing, ‘New Approaches to Arab Left Histories’.

political momentum by mobilising popular support, coordinating between exiles and non-exiles,³ maintaining ad hoc alliances with communists and religious groups and unifying counter-hegemonic forces against Al Khalifa? These questions are also crucial for understanding Bahraini internal sociopolitical dynamics during the uprisings in the 1990s and from 2011 onwards under the international and regional social changes. More importantly, while the issue of sectarianism has become a locus for recent IRME scholarship tracing the historical roots of regional conflict, an alternative account could be presented through seeing sectarianism as a modern product and a process of politicisation conditioned by historical contexts but mainly shaped by sociopolitical dynamics of agent practice.⁴ That suggests a further investigation of how the recent geopolitical competition seemingly in line with sectarianisation on the regional scale intertwines with political struggles on the national level could also be conducted through a reformulated theoretical lens of Gramsci.

Resonating with the significance of ‘other histories’, another proposal then relates to the role of different social agents and the varying processes of state formation among cases. While these agents have often been referred to as ‘elites’ in existing scholarship, their sociological connotations are obscure in the context of the Middle East. Through the concept of intellectuals informed by Gramsci, such obscurity could be overcome. As this thesis suggests, due to the characteristics of a late-coming capitalist state, intellectuals also represent rather antagonistic social forces deriving from contradictions within society. Quiet often, their political agenda and practices manifest themselves as being more than just the opposition. In this vein, the domestic contestation around certain foreign policy issues might go beyond a debate on what interests a state should pursue and examine who should represent the state, as the case of Al Khalifa’s alignment with the US has shown in this thesis. In the Middle East, this contestation usually shows some diverse cases of different ideological connections between the regime and civil society along with historical progress toward de-

³ Beauprand, ‘In and Out Moves of the Bahraini Opposition: How Years of Political Exile Led to the Opening of an International Front During the 2011 Crisis in Bahrain’.

⁴ Nader Hashemi and Danny Postel, eds., *Sectarianization: Mapping the New Politics of the Middle East* (London: Hurst, 2017).

colonisation. As such, the framework applied to the case of Bahrain in the transitional period between the end of the colonial rule and the beginning of the independence phase could be useful to other cases in the Middle East, especially those Arab states whose formal independence was not achieved through the revolutionary trajectories of Egypt, Syria and Iraq. It is worth asking: how did those non-revolutionary regimes manage to stay in power by re-linking themselves ideologically to civil society? How did they deal with the legacy of colonialism in the process of state formation under international pressure from geopolitical and capitalist competition? For these questions, taking similar historical, social and political conditions into account, one interesting case, which has also been studied less, might arise as a potential comparison with Bahrain: Qatar. It attained formal independence in the same year and in the same revolutionary regional context but went through a different trajectory afterwards. Particularly, it passed through a rather stable process of power transition at the top, which then led to a re-configuration of power among royal members and even among other intellectuals in civil society.⁵ It could be hypothesised that the Al Thani regime in Qatar in the 1970s went through a relatively successful top-down intra-palace ‘white revolution’ in comparison with Bahrain.

Through the potential empirical research proposed above, a viable historical sociological framework of such a reformulated Gramscian lens could be substantiated further beyond its current marriage with the Bahraini case in the 1970s. As this thesis proceeds to the end, it is helpful to make a concluding remark on what this thesis has to say about the scholarship of IRME and HSIR in general.

My statement follows the recent revival of historical materialism in IR through international social theory, particularly the school of uneven and combined development, and integrating this intellectual trend with a Gramscian turn within the traditions of historical sociology. It is about how we explain the creation, persistence and transformation of international relations in the Middle East by transcending a binary understanding of some analytical instances – the international versus the national scale, the material versus ideational factors and, more importantly, historical

⁵ Jill Crystal, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf: Rulers and Merchants in Kuwait and Qatar* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

conditions versus contingencies. Resonating with Benno Teschke and Steffan Wyn-Jones' call for 'a paradigmatic turn for the incorporation of FPA and international politics into a revised Marxist research programme',⁶ it is imperative to reconsider changing international and regional orders beyond 'putative predictable and structurally determined logics' along 'the unfolding of capitalism or power politics'.⁷ For the first two instances, Gramsci has left us precious intellectual assets that are empirically supported by the previous chapters in this thesis. What can lead us to improve a Gramscian intervention in HSIR, IR and even FPA in general is taking both 'historical conditions' and 'historical contingencies' into consideration. In existing mainstream IR, such a consideration is either rarely touched on or just stresses the former around what composes such conditions, either material or ideational factors. However, it resides within the research agenda of historical sociology. Moreover, while Rosenberg's reformulation of the notion of uneven and combined development stimulates the evolution of HSIR, the issue of conditions and contingencies once again provokes the debate between Weberian and Marxist traditions within historical sociology.⁸ In the case of Bahrain and by drawing on some reformulated Gramsci's insights, this thesis has not gone that far towards offering a solution for the debate. Nonetheless, this thesis has shown empirically how (re)articulation of 'the political' and 'the social' originated and formed under the historical condition of combination realised through capitalist formation, as well as how such a (re)articulation brought about different outcomes contingent on political struggles. At this point, we might come across some interesting theoretical questions: From historical sociology, how do we explain the interplay between conditions and contingencies? And how do we conceptualise it? Certainly, these questions cannot be solved quickly. Yet, they might raise a new research agenda for IR, by which we intervene into the ongoing intra-HSIR debate on whether we could anticipate the grand discipline of International Historical

⁶ Benno Teschke and Steffan Wyn-Jones, 'Marxism in Foreign Policy', in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 1, <http://politics.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-372>.

⁷ Teschke and Wyn-Jones, 20.

⁸ Alexander Anievas, 'History, Theory, and Contingency in the Study of Modern International Relations: The Global Transformation Revisited', *International Theory* 8, no. 3 (2016): 468–80; Barry Buzan and George Lawson, 'Theory, History, and the Global Transformation', *International Theory* 8, no. 3 (2016): 502–22.

Sociology through a reformulated Gramscian lens proposed in this thesis: a trio-analytical toolkit to re-examine the interplay of history (development), theory (ideology) and practice (struggle) in our understanding. More importantly, one thing for sure is that these questions do indeed remind us of some perilous pitfalls: While history is restoring itself and other oblivious histories are unfolding along with struggles, one should avoid making cursory predictions of what consequences will come after the current turmoil in the Middle East.

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